



The Rise of Japan



Prisoners of Prosperity

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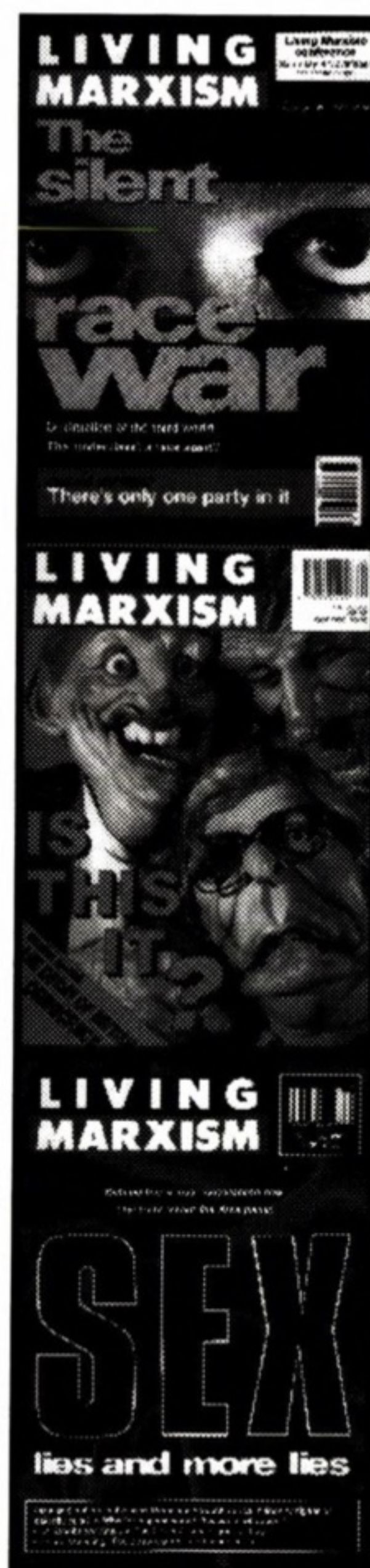
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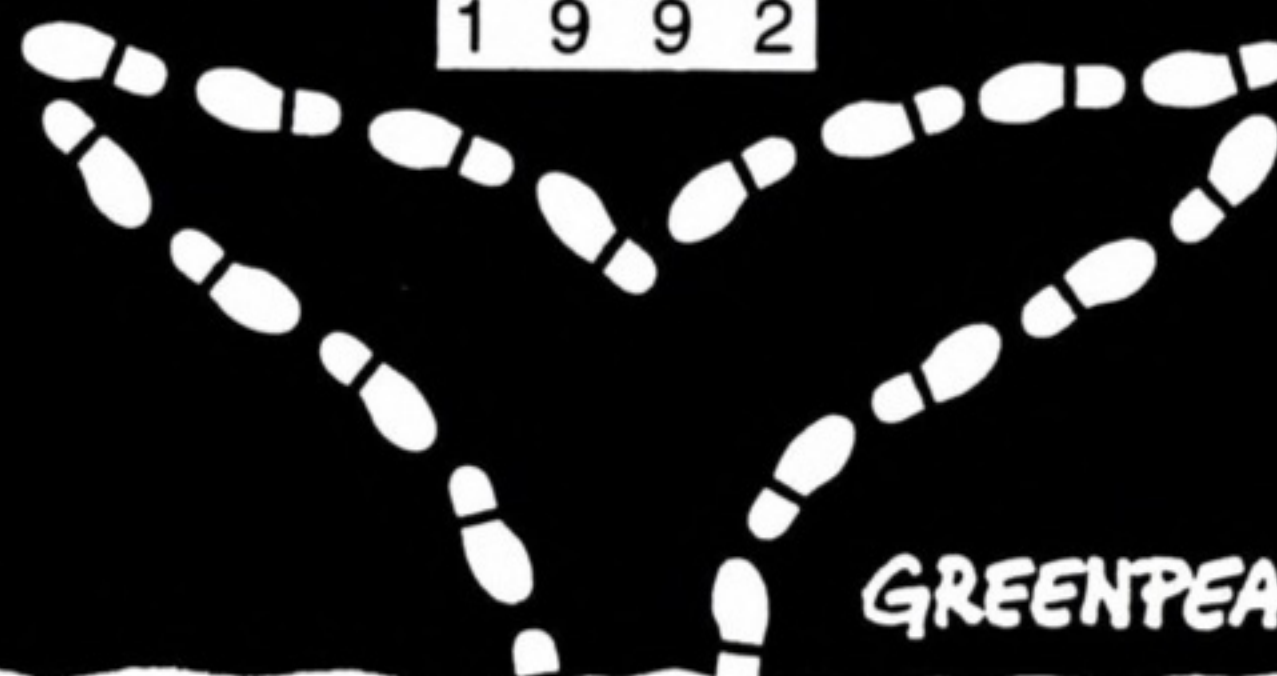


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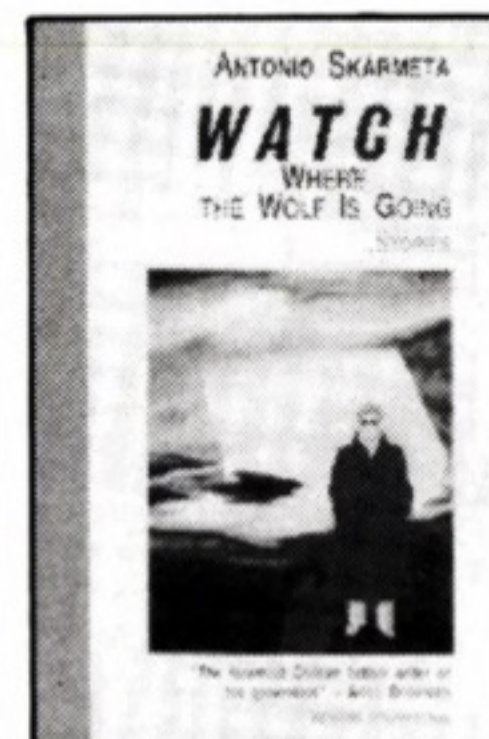
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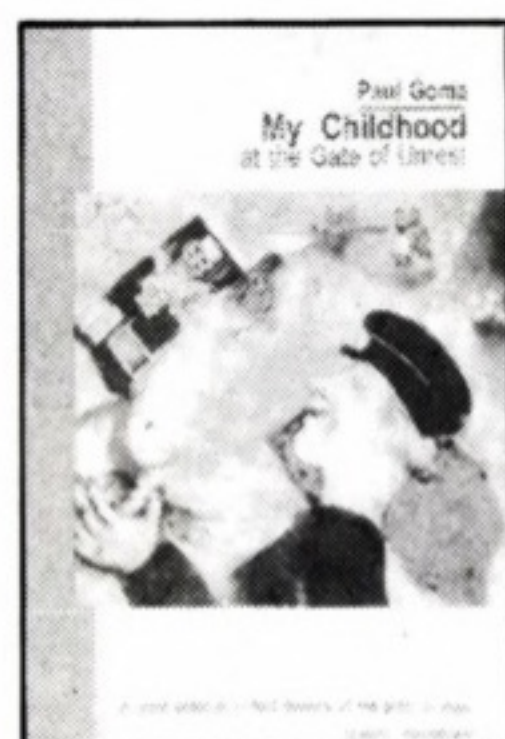
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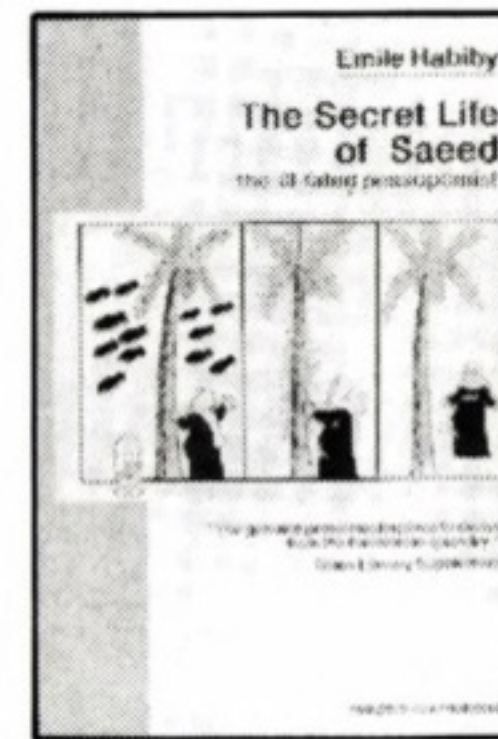
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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: KEN STRAITON

THIS MONTH'S THEME

The Rise of Japan

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

THIS issue of **NI** would not have been possible without the subscribers. This time it's true in more than the usual sense. Several of the articles were written by **NI** subscribers in Japan and many of the observations came from my discussions and correspondence with this small but enthusiastic band. Some are Japanese while others are *gaijin* – mostly British and Canadian expatriates.

I have also tried to include as many Japanese voices as possible. This was not always easy because of the wide gap between written Japanese and written English. Still, I thought it important to put Japanese criticisms of their own society and culture on the record.

Too often in the West one hears phrases like 'the Japanese are taking over' – as if all the Japanese ran Honda or Toyota. Or maybe it's 'the Japanese don't think like us' – as if all Japanese thought exactly the

same way. This way anti-Japanese sentiment slowly becomes acceptable. 'They' are rich, so 'we' don't have to worry about offending an oppressed group like native people. 'They' have their own tradition of racism, so 'we' are really just getting our own back.

But think about it. Isn't this just the kind of psychology that gets whipped up before the powers-that-be pack us off to war – even if it's just a trade war?

You hear about what 'they' did to 'us' during World War Two. What's more they refuse to recognize the crimes they committed and have the temerity to present themselves as the war's main victims.

It is true that powerful people in Japan work hard to blot out such memories, partly because they don't want the Japanese themselves to remember. After all,

the main victims of nationalist fervour in a particular country usually end up being the people of that country themselves. So it was with Japan. Little wonder that those responsible prefer to have short memories.

But we should not be too quick to climb on a high horse here. Has the US come to terms with its crimes in Vietnam? Indonesia? Chile?

The recent silliness over the anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour is a case in point. Official spokespeople on either side refused to apologize – the US for Hiroshima, the Japanese for Pearl Harbour.

This is my chance to clear the air. I hereby apologize to the US for the attack on Pearl Harbour and to the Japanese for the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. You see, guys? It's not all that hard, is it?

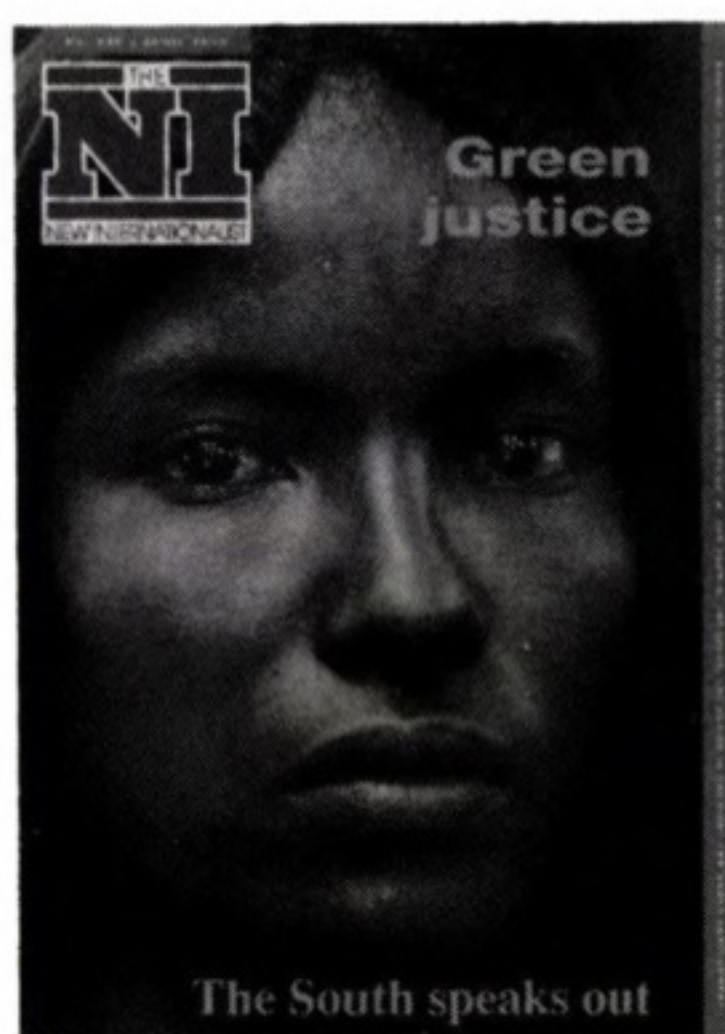
I found many things in Japan unusual and even disturbing. But I also discovered without much surprise that the Japanese laugh, cry, fear and love just like the rest of us. I've come to think of the relationship of the West to Japan as similar to someone looking into a distorting mirror in a funhouse. All your familiar features are there, but they are hard to recognise. Looking at ourselves in the Japanese mirror we see our manic individualism shrink – our sense of identity with the group enlarge; our loud bravado gets squeezed – our fear of the unpredictable becomes elongated. But we are still all there. See if you agree.

Richard Swift

for the New Internationalist Co-operative

Gridlock

I'd love to share your faith in 'global democracy' (*Green Justice*, NI 230), but I can't. The only two serious attempts so far to control the private motorcar, in the Netherlands and Hong Kong, were abandoned when they severely restricted 'individ-



ual freedom' and began to work. So we'll have to wait for the global gridlock to convince us otherwise – by which time it will be too late.

You provide no evidence to suggest that the majority of us, North or South – who live in cities and not up the Amazon or down the Narmada Valley – have changed our minds about the consumer society.

So Saving the Earth looks set to become yet another major issue on which the majority is wrong.

Linda Hampton
Vancouver, Canada

Hair-shirt

Apart from one issue – the Star Trek piss-take (NI 218) – your magazine has failed to do anything constructive about solving the problems the world faces.

Reading NI is like wearing a hair shirt – great for the 2CV-driving, open-toed sandal, Argyle sock and balaclava-wearing, Real Ale-swigging, fascist feminists who bleat endlessly in your pages about what rotten pigs all men are and how all business people are murderers and all blacks are naturally wonderful, warm human beings and how anyone with views different to theirs should be ignored, imprisoned, stoned to death or at least not let into the bar on wimmin's night.

Preaching to the converted is



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

easy. Communicating to those who regard the world as an infinite resource to be exploited or who see nothing wrong in screwing up the world and her husband for a few quid is not such an easy middle-class sop to the conscience or polish to the ego.

Iain Rendell
London, UK

Grounds for divorce

I must point out a woeful inaccuracy in an otherwise interesting article on *Sexual Exiles* in NI 229. Failure to obey one's husband is not grounds for divorce 'under Islam'. It may be grounds for divorce under Iranian law, but that is an entirely different matter.

Failure to distinguish between laws of a land and religious teaching is a frequent failing of the press and serves to further distort the already biased view of Islam that is prevalent in the West.

One would be very surprised indeed to read, for example, that adultery was the grounds for divorce 'under Christianity'.

Susan Quick
Burnham, UK

Slavery omission

Perhaps I am jaundiced by your failure to mention Anti-Slavery International in the Action Directory of your issue on Human Rights (NI 229). After all we are the world's oldest international human rights organization.

However, I was very surprised at the omission of any mention in the whole issue of the work of the increasing number of Third World Human Rights groups such as the Pastoral Land Commission in Brazil or the Bonded Labour Liberation Fronts in India and Pakistan. Such organizations must be given the opportunity to set the agenda for change in their own countries and the consequent needs for international action and support.

David Ould
Anti-Slavery International, London UK.

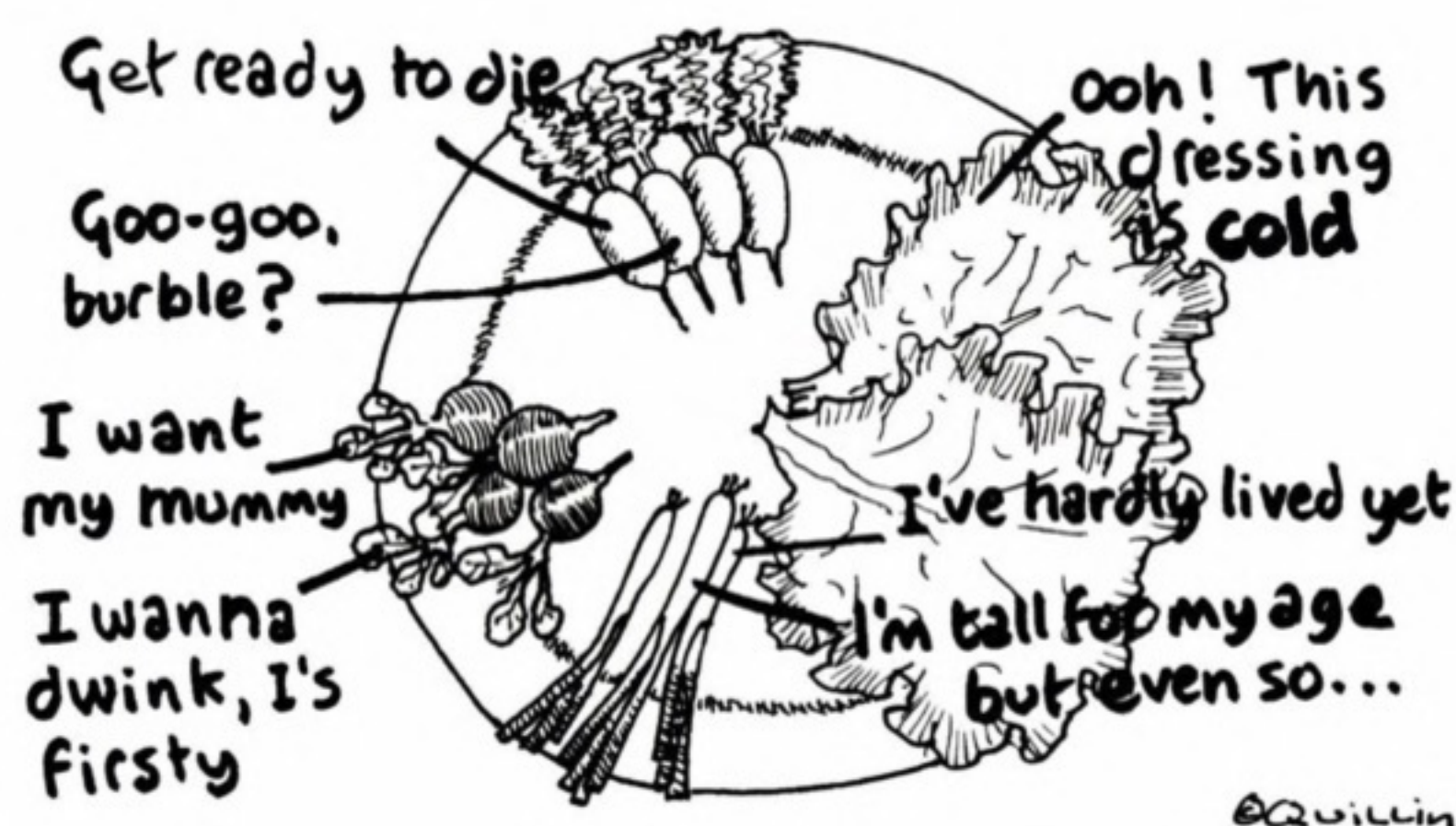
Apartheid lives

Your *Running for Rights – a Second NI Olympics* (NI 229) takes an ironic twist with the mention of increased freedom in South Africa. For South Africa's Olympics team will still be an apartheid team.

Animal chauvinism

I also find myself alternately irritated and amused by 'virtuous vegetarians' (*Letters* NI 228) who on the one hand ignore that the human being is one of nature's garbage guts, designed to eat anything that is not directly poisonous. On the other hand these virtuous vegetarians deny or belittle plant consciousness. This act can only be described as base animal chauvinism. Is a tree less than a sheep? Life feeds upon life. That's life. I enjoy my vegetables and I too must admit to discrimination. When I eat meat I make sure it's dead first.

Robert Maxwell
Ipswich, UK



Concealed by the euphoria are three facts. South Africa's black 'homelands' have not been abolished. Eight million blacks (and not even one white) in the four 'independent' homelands have still had their South African citizenship stripped from them, thus excluding them from South Africa's sport and riches. And the entire 'homelands' system is the very focal point of apartheid.

Apartheid lives on – and South Africa, as usual, deceives us.

Len Clarke
Uxbridge, UK

One village

What actually happened in the early days of Oxfam trading (*Of Mickey Mouse and hunger* NI 228) was the company bought 'native handicrafts' from UK importers in order to make profits for its own purposes. It was this practice of setting out to make a profit off the work of the poor, even if to give charity to other poor, which I was unwilling to continue.

The word 'alternative' was first used in relation to our concept for Bridge Co-operative, a proposed partnership of producers and consumers controlled by both in their joint interests. Our present marketing organization, One Village, is committed to the same partnership ideal.

Roy Scott
One Village, Oxford, UK

Some charity

The views expressed in 'Changing Charity' (NI 228) will certainly *not* encourage greater accountability within management of voluntary sector organizations.

Superficial comments on the emerging 'professionalism' disguise and leave unquestioned many employment practices of some non-religious aid agencies where it is not uncommon for unionization to be viewed with hostility; summary dismissal to occur following personality disputes with managers; sex-role stereotyping in recruitment to go unchallenged and award wages not to be paid.

Before voluntary sector managers can claim credibility for their 'crusade' in the south,

they must first reorientate their organizations at home to ensure non-exploitative and fair employment practices.

Lydia Holmes
Footscray, Australia

Impure heroines

Geoffrey Fox, who wrote about Latin American soap operas in the *Update* section (NI 227) has got some of his facts wrong. In Brazilian tele-novelas the heroines are usually far from being pure and virginal.

The heroine he mentions, Dona Beija, is in fact a prostitute and a murderer. Her story is based upon the real life experiences of an eighteenth century woman from Minas Gerais who, at the age of 15, was abandoned by her fiancé after being raped by an important politician.

Rejecting the two options open to her – to become her assailant's mistress or to enter a brothel – she did something unheard of at the time: she became an independent prostitute.

She was very successful, but she remained plagued by her continuing and frustrated love for her ex-fiancé, who had meanwhile married someone else.

In a fit of jealousy, she had him murdered, then repented, retired and became the benefactress of the Church and various charities. Hardly, I would say, a woman who 'remained predictably pure'!

Clara Allain
São Paulo, Brazil

Visual pessimists

It's a pity, the content of the NI is innovative, courageous, positive, great. But the visual presentation does not correspond with this at all.

Why is your journal so full of black bars, black lines, black rectangles, black ink? Is your view of the world pessimist? I don't have this impression: the text shows hope, possibilities for action, change. After the redesign the pages became slightly clearer – but the mood is still heavy.

Felix Küchler
Natitingou, Benin.

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

L E T T E R F R O M I N D I A



An international GATTastrophe

Fancy eating food laced with DDT? Or bits of dead dolphin in your tinned fish? You'll have no chance to say 'no thank you' if GATT gets its way. Mari Marcel Thekaekara explains why.

GATT. General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. It's enough to turn you off and let your eyes automatically move on to a more interesting headline. But STOP. This concerns YOU. GATT is dangerous. It seeks to control your life so that a number of already rich people can get richer.

Concerned people from most countries of the world are attempting to fight this new menace. But the vested interests involved are extremely powerful. And since the mere mention of trade talks makes most people yawn, they have succeeded in keeping from the public at large news of a process which is like a revised hi-tech form of colonialism.

Their intention is to make the world economy a friendlier, safer environment for multinational corporations, particularly those from the US, Japan and rich EC countries.

GATT aims to remove all non-tariff trade barriers, which means every country gives up its right to determine what should or should not enter its borders. For example Britain and most European countries have stricter controls on injecting hormones into meat than the US. And these would be lifted as they are a barrier to free trade.

Environmental laws everywhere would be revised as GATT wishes an international (GATT) code to take the place of current, more stringent rules won after years of hard work by environmental and consumer lobbies. Among other regulations GATT has already attacked are the Danish recycling laws, a US asbestos ban, a Canadian fish conservation programme, the EC's meat hormone ban, Canadian provincial-level reforestation programmes.

Environmentalists had succeeded in getting legislation passed in the US that banned fisherfolk from using a method of tuna fishing which also killed dolphins. Now Mexico has gone to GATT complaining that the ban on the dolphin killing method is an unfair restriction on Mexican trawlers. And even a US Senator known for his conservatism joined the fight against GATT, furious that a US law could be overturned by Mexican or other GATT representatives.

Cultural or religious bans will not be tolerated either, so Islamic or Jewish populations will no longer be able to restrict the entry of pork products into their countries.

And the people of the North are about to lose a big battle against safe foods. GATT seeks to impose a set of standards which are consistently weaker than those of the US or EC countries and

which will mean that Americans and Europeans will be forced to accept food laced with DDT.

Congress Watch activists, frustrated at not being able to make their point – neither US Senators nor Congress persons wanted to read boring GATT reports – dumped broccoli on every Congress person's table one morning with a note saying that after GATT regulations take hold, 'the broccoli you eat will contain 33 times



JOEL CHIZIANE 2

more DDT, 21 times more Permethrin, three times more Aldrin and five times more Heptachlor'. Only then did the politicians sit up and read the report.

None of this however seems to bother US trade representatives who have turned their guns on those developing countries that have maintained that allowing US multinationals free entry would damage local enterprises. The US accuses India of not observing US patent rights. Among other things these stipulate that if a US scientist produces a drug, no Third World manufacturer can attempt to produce this medicine even if they arrive at the product through their own ingenuity. Instead they have to buy it from the US at US prices. And here comes the crunch; India and developing countries simply cannot afford US medicines. Indian medicines are about ten times cheaper. Under GATT regulations, however, such countries will have no alternative but to cough up.

The same is true of food grains. Western scientists take indigenous seed from Asia or Africa, experiment with it in their labs, and *voilà*, it's their invention and they patent it. Asian and African farmers must buy it back for extortionate sums. And under GATT this situation will worsen.

Already people from every nation have united to fight GATT. It has to be a world campaign. Join it. Your life depends on it. ■

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for seven years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The rise of Japan

Prisoners of prosperity



KEN STRAITON

*At the heart of the Japanese economic miracle is a vacuum.
Richard Swift meets the giant of the new world order and reflects on
where it may be heading.*

HOW to explain the 14-year-old girl in a neat school uniform with her head stuck in a comic full of lurid scenes of rape and castration? Or the farewell bows of the hostess – resplendent in demure traditional gown – to her clientele of workaholic ‘salarymen’ as they stumble their way home after far too much *sake*?

Images of Japan — especially those that stay with you — have an exotic quality that leads to a lot of head scratching by Western visitors. Even little things seem to jar: the

amount of living space even for the wealthiest; the artificial bird songs piped into a bustling train station; the two-storey downtown driving range for golf aficionados; the neat little *koban* police boxes that dot every neighbourhood.

Japan, perhaps more than any other culture, evokes a Western response of ‘other’. The Japanese are ‘developed’ like Westerners — but somehow the sums of the equation add up differently. In the packed streets of Tokyo or Osaka the tumult has a

determined quality, as if everyone knows not only what they are doing but also what to expect of everyone else. It’s a collectivist society, where you wear a mouth mask if you have a cold so others won’t catch it. By North American standards there is little street aggro — no taxi drivers screaming at each other over a fare, few beggars to gesticulate wildly at everyone and no-one, and no fear of a predatory underclass poised to mug and murder. An intense and often invisible social pressure

binds this society together.

There is an appealing attention to detail in zen gardens or tea ceremonies, yet a formality in human relationships that can feel stiff and even hypocritical. Conflict is buried. Tremendous economic advancement has resulted, but the cultural and psychological costs are high. One senses a kind of underlying cultural anxiety – a profound fear of the unknown, the unpredictable. The authorities are apprehensive about disorder, about the complexity of that same society they have worked so hard to build. An unanswered question hangs in the air. What does Japan's economic success mean – both for the rest of the world and indeed for the Japanese themselves?

Throwaway culture

There are no two ways about it – mass, Western-style consumer culture has taken hold of the Japanese. You can see that in the trash on garbage day – impressive piles of perfectly good electronic gadgets, TVs, stereos and the like thrown out by consumers who have simply run out of room for the latest model in their cramped apartments. The Japanese are now the front runners in that most resilient of Euro-American inventions – the rat-race called global capitalism. It's all there in the growth rates and trade surplus figures. Market share is the name of the game. And whether it's selling video recorders in Jakarta or Toyotas in Cleveland, it's 'advantage Japan'.

But there are real problems with the quality of life for most Japanese. There's precious little free time. Most public services and amenities – unemployment benefits, public parks and libraries, old age pensions – are hopelessly inadequate. The housing stock is poor and expensive. Incomes may have soared in the last decade, but the cost of beef and tuna is exorbitant, a staple like rice sells for several times the world price and the increasingly popular cup of coffee will set you back \$3.50.

Still, Japan's current recession would be judged a boom by most other countries. And there is no clearer indication of Japan's new place in the pecking order of nations than George Bush's humiliating trip there in the fall of 1991 – with the three whining chief executives of the major US car companies in tow. He started off cutting the ribbon at the opening of a toy store belonging to the US chain Toys R Us and ended by throwing up on the shoes of the Japanese Prime Minister. As one Japanese observer remarked with characteristic understatement: 'Things must be pretty bad for the President of the United States to come all this way to open a toy store.'

The energy of Japanese corporations, backed by the capital of Japanese banks, is changing the face of what in the 1970s came to be known as the Pacific Rim – par-



LARS BAHL / IMPACT VISUALS

'New humans' just hanging out; a favourite target of media criticism.

ticularly its Third World regions. In countries like Thailand, South Korea and Mexico Japanese capital is financing the low-wage assembly of already manufactured components. In Indonesia and Brazil it's geared more to the profitable extraction of the raw materials needed to fuel the factories of Osaka and Kobe. Of the total Japanese investment in the Third World between 1951 and 1988 nearly as much was put into Latin America (\$31.6 billion) as went into Asia (\$32.3 billion). Investment in Africa was less than two billion dollars. The Japanese have shown astute business judgment in their loans to

Third World governments – with a smaller percentage of exposure to risky loans than any other major lending country.

Japanese capital is also there – if less visible in the more developed economies of the Pacific region – digging up Canadian coal, cutting down Australian timber, helping to create and then fund Washington's huge deficit.

Yet Japan seems to lack any sense of vision to go along with its global economic muscle. 'We think locally and act globally,' says one astute Japanese observer, reversing the familiar dictum. The defeat of Japan's imperial ambitions in the Second

World War seems to have created a vacuum in thinking about how the country should relate to the rest of the world. The up side of this is a definite aversion to crude US-style helicopter-gunship diplomacy. The down side is a sort of inward-looking xenophobia. Recently Japan has been toying with the notion that it has an international ecological mission to save Planet Earth. But for this to have any credibility it must be more than an excuse for lucrative mega-projects and the marketing of expensive pollution abatement technologies.

Top donor

Japan is beginning to overcome its traditional isolationism and take a broader interest in the wider world. Japan's profile at the UN has gone up a couple of notches and its official aid budget (called ODA – Overseas Development Assistance) is now the largest in the world. The figures are staggering – \$50 billion for the five year period 1987-92. But Japanese ODA has a reputation for re-cycling yen collected as taxes back to Japanese companies, despite boasts that little of its aid is 'tied'. The figures are arrived at by discounting, for example, projects where initial procurement is the responsibility of a Third World agent – even though what is procured may come from Japan.

Unlike other donor countries Japan has no agency with overall responsibility for aid. ODA decision-making rests with the Foreign Ministry, the Finance Ministry, the

Economic Planning Agency and the powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). The budget is spread among sixteen ministries and agencies. This makes it easier for their corporate clients to have access to ODA funds. Many development projects are initiated by consulting companies associated with major Japanese corporate groups.

This kind of collaboration between public and private sectors comes as no surprise to the average student of Japanese business culture and history. Maverick capitalists like Donald Trump or Rupert Murdoch are a rarity in Tokyo business life. Instead a closely-knit corporate team works hand-in-glove with its counterparts in the public sector. This is the secret of Japan Inc's success – much to the discomfort of entrepreneurial individualists in the West.

Japanese success has not been met with much enthusiasm by its trading adversaries, particularly by a US hungry for enemies after the Cold War. There have been 35 books published in the US in the last couple of years about 'the looming threat of Japan'. Politicians have been quick to whip up anti-Japanese sentiment. The charming suggestion made by one US senator from South Carolina – that workers mark each of their products with 'made by lazy US workers' under a mushroom cloud symbol – sets the intellectual tone of the onslaught. Little wonder there have been a number of assaults on Japanese. One in Los Angeles resulted in the victim being stabbed to

death by two unemployed auto workers.

It's as if North Americans and Europeans were laying claim to a God-given right to be wealthier than anyone else. If the Japanese are doing better they must be cheating, trading unfairly, dumping products. It's an easy explanation for the recession that has accompanied the re-structuring of the North American economy. The triumphal optimism about 'winning the Cold War' has evaporated very quickly in Washington. The uncomfortable truth is starting to dawn that like all wars the Cold War had two losers. The US economy has been left a junkie whose only fix is wasteful military spending. This goes a long way towards explaining the runaway deficit and the chronic US inability to compete with the Japanese or the Germans in the production of basic civilian goods.

Japanese capitalism is no more – or less – predatory than any other variety. But for many in the Third World dealing with the Japanese is a refreshing change. At worst Japan provides some leverage for beleaguered Third World governments when dealing with Euro-American pressures. Other Asians seem quick to adapt to Japanese ways. One Chinese journalist who lives in Tokyo claims that 'Asians feel more comfortable with the Japanese and are hanging their hopes on them because they are not such sticklers for rules and laws.' The Japanese have tried to play this card to best advantage – portraying themselves as the liberators of Asia and an alternative to white global domination.

Profit hunt

For the most part this is sheer rhetoric. Japan has the same sorry record as other neo-colonial powers – whether promoting harmful and capital-intensive chemical agriculture in the Philippines or propping up military regimes from Fiji to Burma (Myanmar). Japanese bureaucrats and business people have been particularly keen on mega-projects like roads, dams and port facilities. In places like Thailand, Brazil and Indonesia these projects provide lucrative contracts for the highly profitable Japanese construction industry as well as access to the fish, timber, minerals and other natural resources desperately needed by a resource-poor Japan. A large proportion of Japanese ODA is in the form of 'soft loans' rather than outright grants, adding to the Third World debt load.

Opposite the 'New Yellow Peril' school in the West is the 'Let's Copy Japan' crowd. Among its ranks are politicians, managerial consultants and economists engaged in the endless search for 'productivity'. Japanese strategies, sacrificing profit and dividends in favour of market share, or ploughing lots of money into research and development, are not often mentioned.

Karoshi – death by overwork – is a distinctly Japanese disease.



PATRICK ZAGHMANN / MAGNUM

The copiers tend to pick out the least democratic features of Japanese management philosophy and suggest that unless these are adopted by Western economies they will continue to fall behind. But how easily Japanese work habits and group loyalties can be imported into other cultures is questionable. Indeed, the first rumblings of discontent with Japan Inc can now be heard back home in cities like Sapporo and Kyoto.

Closed clique

One of the keys to Japanese success is the high level of co-ordination between bureaucratic mandarins, the political power brokers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the executives of Japan's major corporate groups like Mitsui and Mitsubishi. In Japan such people form a more homogeneous group, held together in 'old boy networks' formed back in their university days at the prestigious University of Tokyo. It is not unusual for a powerful civil servant to quit his job for a career in politics and then go on to a corporate appointment. Critics claim that this closed circle – broken only by factional conflict within the elite – has a profoundly undemocratic influence.

But unlike most autocracies it is very difficult to tell who in Japan is actually pulling the strings. Rules are often vague and alternately flexible and inflexible depending on the needs of the moment. A national policy based on strict financial and social control from above seems constant. There is a stronger sense of common national purpose, less ideological disagreement between public and private sectors than in the West. This had its roots in pre-war fascist notions of a co-ordinated 'national will' so popular with the older generation of architects of post-war Japan like Uemura Kogoro and Hoashi Kei.

While Japan has democratic guarantees similar to many other representative democracies, the power of the senior bureaucrats who control the ministries is largely unchecked. Even the theoretically independent judiciary is under the thumb of the civil service. Ordinary Japanese have little effective legal recourse against either corporate power or bureaucratic arrogance. There are very few acquittals in cases that the prosecution decides to bring to trial – just 67 of the 63,204 receiving their first criminal trial in 1986.

Fear mixes with habit to create a political culture where conflict and fundamental questioning are strictly contained. This approach carries over into other institutions in Japanese life, into the company, the school, the police or the family. Loyalty, productivity and obedience are the order of the day. This gives Japan a tremendous economic advantage over foreign competitors – there is little theft or sabotage and



RICHARD KALVAR / MAGNUM

Take that! Corporal punishment is used to enforce Japan's draconian school rules.

workers can be relied upon to perform diligently without expensive supervision.

This state of affairs is not accepted uncritically by all Japanese people. There are many signs of discontent. In a sense Japan is the most devotedly anti-militaristic society in the world. Its peace movement has deep roots in the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The role and budget of the Defence Force are matters of keen scrutiny. Recently a fist fight broke out on the floor of the Diet when the ruling LDP tried to bring forward a bill allowing Japanese troops to participate in UN peace-keeping missions. Sending the military abroad is strictly forbidden by the post-war Constitution, now bitterly opposed by right-wing nationalists. The emotion generated by this issue indicates a keen popular awareness of the potential for militarism in the regimented structures of Japanese life and a determination to resist it.

Another source of discontent is the quality of family life. Japanese women are beginning to show a marked reluctance to get hitched up to workaholic husbands whom they never see and who have no role in child-rearing or domestic chores. Japanese fathers and husbands are sometimes referred to as 'big dust' to be swept out in the process of house-cleaning.

A kind of generation gap is beginning to open up between older Japanese, who are more committed to their company, the emperor or even socialism, and the generation of 'new humans' whom the official media constantly decry for their nihilistic materialism and lack of patriotism or sense

of duty. In this generation gap lies both a threat and an opportunity. Detached from the old loyalties, this new generation could become cannon-fodder for demagogues, mindless consumers of the Japanese miracle – or active builders of a more relaxed and democratic Japan. New social movements around environmental and nuclear issues are a promising sign. The national mania to learn English is, according to the head of one Tokyo language school, 'not merely for business but the desire to escape the tight confines of group life in Japan – a genuine cosmopolitanism'.

But if social change is to follow economic change it will be Japanese, not some cultural surrender to Western individualism. Japan has much to offer as the raw material for change. Fierce loyalty to the hierarchies of business and state can be matched by a kind of horizontal solidarity, a loyalty to communities both in Japan and in the Third World. The tenacious fight of Japanese farmers and their allies against the building of Narita airport outside Tokyo shows the potential for this. There is also a sensitivity in Japanese culture to the feelings of others, a desire to listen rather than sound off, on the assumption that anyone can voice everyone else's needs and feelings. This modesty could provide a useful antidote for Western ego-centrism. What is often negative in Japan – work and anti-individualism – also contain the possibilities for something better. Those Japanese who are engaged in uncovering such potential deserve our respect and support.

Letter from Mitaka



LARS BAHL / IMPACT VISUALS

Masaoki Hoshino shares his hopes and fears for his country.

Dear Richard,

You asked me about my expectations for Japan now we have the reputation as a great and prosperous nation. Let me start with my own experience.

I was born in Osaka during the Second World War – 1944 to be exact. My father was a high-ranking officer in the Imperial Japanese Army. He participated in the invasion of China. Our family line was Shizoku – direct descendants of Samurai warriors. By my father's time the Shizoku had transferred their loyalty to the imperial throne.

After that great turning point in Japanese history, the Meiji Restoration (1868), this ethic of loyalty to the emperor was required of all Japanese citizens. Many Koreans and other Asians became his subjects as well by right of conquest. The imperial ethic even entered family life with the head of the patriarchal family becoming a little emperor. The Japanese family became the smallest unit of the emperor system.

I was born and raised in such a family. My father was proud of being a soldier and a descendent of the Samurai. But my grandmother was a Christian with a different set of values. The two sets of values

tugged at my heart. When I was 13 my father passed away and we lost all our possessions to bankruptcy. I felt released from the traditional values of the Hoshino family and became a Christian.

But I found the emperor system alive and well even in the church. A minister was also expected to be a strong leader and was referred to by the honorific of *Sensei*, meaning teacher. I felt comfortable having a new little emperor to follow. But I began to see society and people in a different light. I entered a seminary and became a minister myself and in 1968 I got my own church in an isolated rural community.

The church had no congregation so I started working with the poor farmers, whose good humour and hope for the future I found infectious. But farmers were encouraged to leave their land and seek work with Japanese corporations in the city. There the imperial ethic of loyal obedience made the company emperor. Everyone danced to the tune of 'work hard to catch up with the West' and we succeeded.

But our agriculture wallowed in neglect. Many rural communities were in ruins. As the decade wore on the smiles on the faces of the young farmers that had greeted me

when I first arrived in our community began to fade. Indeed there were no young or even middle-aged faces to be seen.

I sensed that as Japan lost its agriculture it would also lose its independence. For me agriculture and rural communities hold the original shape of Japanese cultural tradition and spirituality. The frightening speed of change caused an almost invisible frustration amongst the people – and not just in the countryside. The way we prepare our food, the pace of life, how we treat our families – there was no longer a firm foundation on which to stand.

I think we lost our identity as Japanese – and most of us didn't notice until it was too late. Loss of identity left a vacuum. The Government tried to fill it with a 'new patriotism'. The Ministry of Education set out to teach the new generation an uncritical love of nation and emperor. The far Right took heart at this and started their own campaign of emperor worship. Their parades of cars now snake through the streets of our cities with militants in military-style uniforms flying the controversial rising sun flag.

After the spurt of economic growth that started in the late 1960s fashionable new religious cults started popping up like rooms after a spring rain. They reflect the failure of traditional Japanese religion to meet the needs of young people. Kohutano-Kagaku ('The Science of Happiness') has gained millions of new adherents over the last couple of years. Kids in my country are subjected to intense competitive pressure. For them the present is hard, the future beyond their control.

I fear these unhealthy tendencies will come together to create a new type of fascism in our country. Sometimes I wonder if our great expansion in economic power isn't just a bubble. Our success and prosperity are hard to experience in everyday life. We work hard to make money for the company, but sometimes we wonder if there is anything to life besides work.

Many Japanese are starting to get pessimistic about the country's future. But a few of us think that now is the right time to abandon the dreams of economic supremacy and look to a new horizon for humanity and society. We feel that this is the path for realizing our Japaneseness. When we were poor and small we lost our joy and our identity because of our poverty; when we became rich and big we lost them because of our plenty. Now we must find a new balance to strike.

Yours truly

Masaoki

Masaoki Hoshino,
United Church Minister, Mitaka, Japan

The nail that sticks out

Conformists belong, non-conformists and ethnic minorities get hammered in Japan. John Charles and Peter Mallat unravel Japanese groupthink.

proud... but war has ruined us.' He shrugs, smiles ruefully, and is consumed by the surging crowd.

The old man crouches on the granite steps, mumbling to himself and re-fighting long forgotten battles. The salarymen weave wary circles round his stinking nest. Nobody has spoken to him here – he says – for 20 years. In his sad delusion he imagines that his wealthy wife drives him out of the house each day 'to avoid gossip' and picks him up at night. In this most group-oriented of societies even the drop-outs cling to rags of respectability. *Wa* means 'harmony' or 'proper place': the executive in the office and the Little Woman minding the hearth. The consequences of social deviance are so alarming that office workers between jobs are sometimes forced into masquerades of leaving home in the morning to return at the end of the working day. You see them snoring in theatres and glumly clock-watching in coffee shops.

Japan is unthinkable without groups. Perhaps they developed from the co-operative labour needed in the scattered villages of a rice-growing culture. To this day the threat of *Mura Hachibu* ('rejection from the village' or ostracism) by family, university alumni league, company or even golf club

would be enough to bring the most determined social deviant to heel. It can sometimes seem as if the only escape from the demands of the group lies in madness.

The boy shakes his fist and menaces the train guard through the glass. He suddenly begins to weep. Everybody on the train is desperately playing the game of 'pay no attention'. One passenger – fluent in English from residence abroad – feels it necessary to apologize to the foreigner for such a wanton ruffling of the 'perfect face' of his country. 'I am sorry,' he says. 'He is... strange. His behaviour is... not Japanese.' Not Japanese. The words evoke the whole mentality of group cohesion and rejection and endlessly-interlocking social nets.

Who are the Japanese?

Anthropologically it is not at all clear: a conglomerate of Polynesian, Malay and mainland Asian elements, perhaps from Mongolia, who imposed themselves on the aboriginal Ainu and gradually drove them northwards. The precedence of the Ainu in the islands, like the thorny subject of Japanese army atrocities against the Chinese in the 1930s, is another point glossed over by the schoolbooks.

Culturally it is a different story. Japan has a notion of its own uniqueness that many Japanese are convinced an outsider could never fathom. The Japanese language



'SHIGOTO ARIMASUKA?' pesters the tall, dark-skinned man at the railway exit. He bows incongruously, imitating the mannerisms of the culture he envies. 'Sir, Sir... do you have a job for me?'

He is an Iranian day-labourer, doing the hard, dirty jobs now scorned by almost all Japanese. After getting one day's work he prowls endlessly in search of the next, before bedding down for the night in a local park. Sleeping rough is his only option since the local flophouse was closed by the authorities. For the most part they cause him little trouble. The indifference of the public is, he says, almost worse.

He has – or had – a wife in Iran. Is she still there?... he doesn't know. His working conditions?... a finger-stump is mute testimony. Accident insurance?... the gentleman surely jests. 'We Iranians are...' he begins in English, but words soon escape him, so he switches to Japanese. 'We are

YEN FOR UNDERDEVELOPMENT



Left in the lurch

Japanese business chases the cheapest labour round Asia – until it turns and fights.

It has become a cliché to say that Japanese-style management is the key to the country's economic success. The paternalism of Japanese management, the 'family' relationships between management and workers, and the so-called 'lifetime employment' system are most often credited for building a loyal, obedient and well-disciplined work-force which has made the economic miracle possible.

The workers of Korean Sumida Electric, a subsidiary of a middle-sized Japanese firm, know another side of Japanese corporate practice. On 14 October 1989 they were



Sumida workers tell their side of the story.

informed of their mass dismissal by a fax from their company's Tokyo headquarters. This signalled the beginning of a period of great hardship for the mostly female workers from the plant. They sent representatives to Japan to negotiate with the company and eventually reached a settlement.

Korean Sumida is typical of the 'runaway shop', an increasingly conspicuous problem in Asia. Since early in its history the company

has followed a strategy of chasing cheap labour in order to keep down production costs. In 1972, lured by a cheap and plentiful labour supply, tax breaks and a state willing to repress labour activism, it set up a factory in Masan City in the South Korean Masan-Changwon free trade zone. The firm also set up plants in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, and now has nearly 96 per cent of its production-base abroad. Its overseas labour force has reached 5,000, but it maintains a domestic staff of just 200.

In August 1987 a labour union was established at the Korean plant. Wages were doubled within two years and working conditions improved. The company reacted by beginning to close down the plant while establishing new operations in Malaysia and Guangzhou Province, China. In 1988 Sumida Electric began soliciting 'voluntary terminations' from among the workers. Some 1,500 of the original 3,000 workers left before the axe finally fell.

The workers, in conjunction with a solidarity network in Japan, sent representatives to negotiate with the Tokyo headquarters. They demanded official apologies, a retraction of the dismissal and a good faith negotiating response from the management. They also demanded the reopening of collective bargaining.

At first the company refused to respond, despite 12 rounds of negotiations. The workers arranged hunger strikes and sit-ins, and finally in June 1990 arrived at a settlement. The company formally apologized for its behaviour, agreed to pay the 450 original union members their full unpaid wages up until October 1989, and living expenses for the 150 current members of the union. This represented a total settlement of two billion won (\$2.8 million).

A report by the Pacific-Asia Resource Centre in Tokyo.

overflows with words of status, words of self-abasement, words of guile and subterfuge – and many words that defy accurate translation. Words like *Ciri* and *On* translate as 'duty' or 'obligation', but the depth of their meaning is quite different. Within the tightly-ordered framework of Japanese groups – village, family, school, workplace – they weigh heavily indeed. Outside these groups they lose almost all meaning. Thus in Japan there is little goodwill for someone you don't know and little sense of a broader public interest. Peter Tasker, in his book *Inside Japan*, calls the Japanese the 'kindest, cruelest' people in the world. The face presented depends entirely on whether you are seen to be part of a group or outside it.

On April 28 1952 Japan was restored to its sovereignty after the post-war American occupation. The nation had miraculously 'endured the unendurable', as the Emperor had enjoined it to do, and had proved a surprisingly warm host to thousands of US troops. This paradox is usually explained in terms of the group system: events had shown that Japan's imperialist ambitions were illusory, and the White Man was top dog. Thus all ranks and groupings moved down one notch giving Americans top status. One of the first acts of the post-occupation government, however, was to require all foreigners to carry a fingerprinted ID card. Protests were immediate and continue.

Jack McIntosh, a Canadian missionary with 30 years in Japan, has no doubt this

law was directed against Koreans and Chinese – the two groups who might pass for Japanese most easily. The 680,000 people of Korean ancestry are the largest minority group in Japan. Most were born here and many speak only Japanese. Yet they must still regularly register as 'aliens' and carry the demeaning ID card at all times. Some 12,000 apply to become Japanese citizens each year. Detailed investigations of kinship and lineage follow. The assumption that they will abandon their cultural heritage and even their family name provokes hatred and rebellion. Usually only about half the applications are successful. McIntosh is an illegal resident himself, on account of his refusal to be fingerprinted in 1985. He therefore cannot leave Japan. He believes the real purpose of the Alien Registration Law is 'to show 16-year-old Korean youth that they are no good'.

Hidden identities

Many schoolchildren of Korean extraction can give you a harrowing description of hiding their backgrounds from their classmates at great psychological cost – only to be found out when presenting a different passport on a school trip. Their friends melted away before their eyes. In Osaka's Ikuno, ward where a quarter of the population is Korean, less than five per cent use their real names in business dealings. Kim Sung Il, a second-generation Korean, refused fingerprinting, was arrested and had his finger prints taken against his will. He recounts the story of a school teacher accused of some trifling infringement of the Registration Law who was taken from her classroom by a hundred police.

Prejudice is deeply ingrained and government policy does little to alter it. A ministry spokesman, Kawakami Tomimi, hit the right level of bland government euphemism: 'If Koreans remain here indefinitely without assimilating, maintaining a separate identity, Japan will have a minority problem. That is undesirable.'

In fact, Japan has had a minority problem for centuries, ever since the Yamato peoples drove the Ainu to the inhospitable northern island of Hokkaido, where they largely remain. Like indigenous peoples everywhere, the Ainu have rediscovered their own identity, and are pressing for reform.

The *Burakumin* minority are actually Japanese, the lowest in a pecking order of rank that was supposedly abolished way back in 1868. The remnants of caste discrimination linger on outside Tokyo or in the districts of the capital that tourists never visit. Such people did and often still do the 'defiling' tasks of slaughter, tanning, corpse disposal and scavenging that society is squeamish about. Despite the 'Economic

Miracle' labour is still needed to remove human excrement especially in country districts – and even in Tokyo itself one on eight homes lacks proper drainage.

'Official Japan' is keen to gloss over the case of the *Burakumin* – it detracts from the image of perfect harmony they want to present to the world. The word *Burakumin* means 'community or hamlet people'. But a hostile Japanese society often refers to these outcasts as *Eta*, a brutally frank word meaning 'extreme filth'. Semantics aside, a caste of untouchables is still clearly in evidence. The Government has tried hard to overcome such prejudice – for *Burakumin* are Japanese after all – in marked contrast to its meagre efforts on behalf of Koreans. But such feelings die hard.

One problem has been the *Koseki*, or Community Registers. Japan is a society that pays elaborate courtesies to ancestors and their spirits. They are yet another group to which obligations are owed. The Japanese go out of their way to prevent any 'mixing of the blood' which they feel would pollute and dishonour their family tree. To preserve this purity of the lineage (*Ie*) extensive record-keeping is needed. Hence the social importance of *Koseki*, which details intimate family information.

Formerly open to casual inspection, the records are now kept locked in an attempt to reduce their influence. Questions about ancestry – in job interviews for example – must be carefully posed. But potential employees are still vetted for ancestry. Robert Steiber, a worker at the Buraku Liberation Centre, suggests one reason is that the employer – always seeking 'harmony' – may feel other workers would be uncomfortable in the presence of *Burakumin*. The blame is thus deftly transferred to the victim. But the *Burakumin* are now asserting a pride in their identity and challenging conformist Japanese society to accept them as they are. It is an uphill fight.

Blood lives

Another use of the *Koseki* is to establish the social background of suitors in marriage. For many – perhaps most – Japanese the admission of low-caste stock into the family remains unthinkable. One of the present writers married a Japanese woman only to find that his mother-in-law would not talk to him for eight years. Such reactions are not at all uncommon. The closure of the documents to the public has led to a brisk trade in illegally obtained copies and the use of private investigators.

There are other disregarded minorities, like those who fail the unforgiving test of the Japanese work ethic. The *Madogiwa-Zoku* ('window-side people') are one such unhappy group. Passed over for promotion and officially regarded by their employers as useless, these usually elderly workers



ALBERTO VENZAGO / MAGNUM

For the *Burakumin* it's an uphill fight to escape Japan's caste ghetto.

are never dismissed. Day after day they check in at the office, where they are assigned conspicuously humiliating desks by the window, suggesting that they will waste time looking out. They are pitied by the most junior of secretaries; victims of the refined cruelty of Japanese management. Some descend into addiction or madness while others can be found in the Kamagasaki district of Osaka where they must compete with younger and stronger workers from Iran or Bangladesh for casual labour jobs.

The Kamagasaki is where contractors go to get casual labour – usually supplied through the *Yakuza* or Japanese gangsters. There are similar districts in most other major Japanese cities. This is the home of the notorious '3K' work: *Kitsui* (hard), *Kitanai* (dirty) and *Kiken* (dangerous). In the absence of a viable social welfare system these districts rake in all those found wanting by Japan's rigorous social tests. These sad people have proved as dispensable as everything else in the new society built on consumption. Their average age in 1990 was 51.2; in 1965 it was just over 34. Between one and two hundred die in these mean streets each year.

After the social unrest of the sixties the Kamagasaki district officially ceased to exist. It was renamed *Airin* ('brotherly love') although no-one who lives there actually uses this name. This is a typical sleight-of-hand of Japanese bureaucracy – call something by another name and you change its nature. Ask ordinary Japanese about it and they will say it is *abunai* (dangerous), but few have ever been there. Ironically, love really is more in evidence there than danger. A genuine sense of community does seem to exist among people stripped of every claim to group-belonging except to each other. The low drinking houses are full

of a spirit of rough comradeship.

The West has been in awe of the Japanese success story for so long that the inequitable nature of traditional society, the way it is grafted onto modern capitalism, gets as little attention as the run-down housing stock. Gross injustice and exploitation, prejudice and social control get submerged beneath the robotics, electronics, geishas and sumo. Women are second-class citizens. Medical and pension benefits are inadequate for an aging society. Xenophobia and cultural one-upmanship flourish. Racial attitudes are hardly exemplary. There is, in particular, a real danger that weak and exploited classes, who have traditionally done the jobs no-one else wants, will be replaced by an even more exploited class, people unable to voice their complaints because of their position as illegal immigrants.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that Japan is a society without compassion. The main problem is the familiar one: ignorance. For most of its citizens Japan has a reasonable lifestyle. The system works for them. They have deep cultural inhibitions against leaving home, let alone attempting to assess the need for social change. So, lacking any real sense of social obligation other than a vague patriotism, they continue to elect a group of corrupt politicians whose scandals keep making the headlines. The politicians in turn pay lip service to the 'problems' of society while presenting Japan's composed, poised, smiling face. The fact that the real scars on Japan's 'perfect face' are now being revealed is, however, a much better harbinger for the future. ■

John Charles is an experienced scribbler whose latest nest is Tokyo and Peter Mallett is a seasoned observer of life in Osaka.



The Vocabulary of Control

The NI looks at the language and levers of power in Japan.

SHIKEN JIGOKU and LJIME

The first is literally 'examination hell'. The second refers to the kind of bullying that goes on in the Japanese school system. From as early as kindergarten Japanese students are under incredible pressure to succeed. They must pass tests and examinations to get into the best secondary schools and universities. Deviant behaviour – or just difference – is punished informally by bullying by cliques of fellow students, or by the exercise of sometimes quite brutal corporal punishment by school authorities. Students are subjected to a tyranny of dozens of petty rules and regulations which they are expected to obey both in and after school hours. The school system works to socialize the individual to the discipline of the group.

試験地獄
いじめ

KISHA KURABU

These are the clubs (about 400 of them) of journalists attached to major Japanese institutions – ministries, big companies, the police, the ruling Liberal Democrats, the Bank of Japan. Some 12,000 journalists belong to these clubs that filter news about the institutions in question and decide what are the acceptable parameters of information and interpretation by their members. A journalist who steps outside these limits either by doing deeper investigative reporting or offering a different interpretation of events is risking expulsion, loss of access to news sources, and eventual loss of livelihood.

記者クラブ

JINMYAKU

Jinmyaku are the networks of unofficial relationships between civil servants, politicians and corporate executives. In Japanese public and business life these networks are forged with favours, money, marriage ties, exchanges of crucial information, and political support. They are the key to a successful career. What might raise eyebrows elsewhere

is considered normal practice in Japan, where notions of conflict of interest or arms-length relationships have little currency. Only occasionally are the press and legal authorities forced to pay attention. Sometimes a politician falls out of favour, or there are major scandals that can't be ignored, like the Lockheed bribery scandal that landed former Prime Minister Tanaka behind bars.

人脈

HONNE/TATEMAE

The former refers to peoples' real intentions – the truth of the heart. The latter refers to the pretence, the formal explanation or officially-given reasons that comprise the placid surface of Japanese life – the truth of the tongue. A great deal of effort goes into maintaining these 'official' explanations. Those who would expose the *honne* of greed or expedience behind the *tatemae* of fine words – the trade

unionist, the environmental activist, the crusading journalist – are subjected to great cultural pressure for creating unnecessary conflict. A good example of maintaining *tatemae* (and hiding *honne*) is Dentsu – the world's largest advertising agency. Dentsu, through its stranglehold on the market in lucrative advertising, actively ensures that news that reflects badly on its clients is either downplayed or not covered at all by a compliant media.

本音建前

TENNO

The Japanese for emperor and all that is implied by the emperor system. More than a mere constitutional monarch, the Emperor is held to have divine qualities. The somewhat vague values that he is held to represent are the very essence of Japaneseness. Yet the Emperor has little real power. Official acts carried out by invoking the imperial mandate are often the cloak for the actions of conservative power-holders. Anyone who criticizes the Emperor or the emperor system can get into very hot water. The mayor of Nagasaki was recently the victim of a rightist assassination attempt for publicly stating that the emperor was partially responsible for atrocities committed by the Japanese during World War Two.

天皇

SHAFU

Company spirit. The plethora of company songs, emblems reminiscent of family crests, group callisthenics, sacred stories of the founders, and endless meetings to encourage co-operation, self-criticism and subordination of the individual to the whole that mark Japanese corporate culture are all well enough known in the West. Less well known are the rigorous, sometimes military-style training courses that are used to integrate new recruits into the demanding work-life of a 'salaryman'. Both free time and family life are sacrificed to *shafu* and a new word *karoshi* has been invented to describe death from overwork by 'salarymen' imbued with *shafu*.

社風

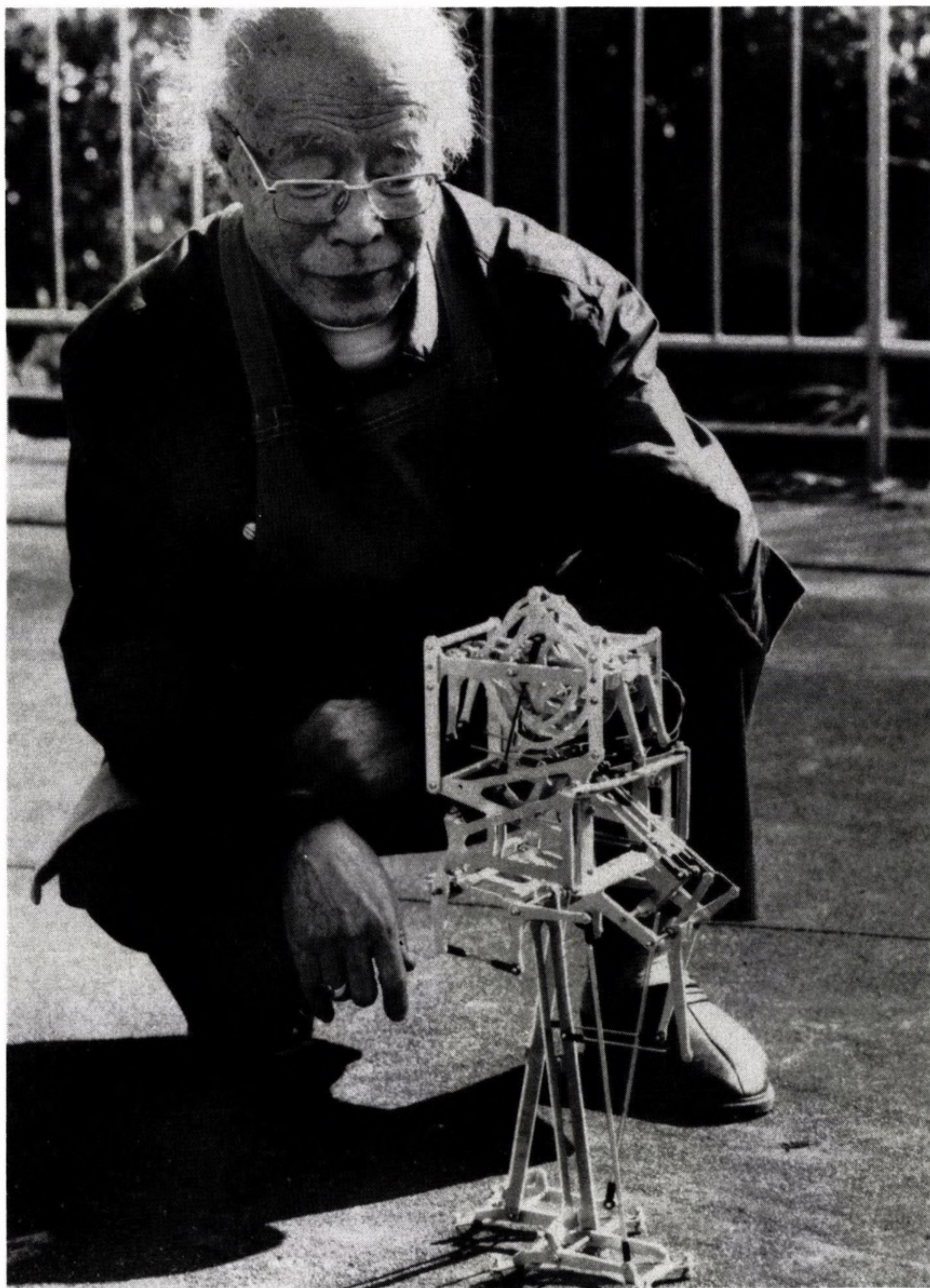
NIHONJINRON

This is the theory of Japaneseness. The widely held view amongst the mandarins of business and government, as well as some scholars, holds that the Japanese culture is unique and subtle – essentially unknowable by outsiders. According to this theory certain types of behaviour – criticism of the Emperor, disrespect for national symbols, being too outspoken or controversial – are un-Japanese. Certain views – particularly radical ones – fall into a similar category. *Nihonjinron* has its roots in pre-war fascist philosophy when it was used as a tool to stifle dissent.

日本人論

Technofix-ation

Japan is sold on – and selling – technology to cure all environmental ills. Rick Davis doesn't buy it.



MICHAEL MACINTYRE / HUTCHISON LIBRARY

MY son has a chronic cough because of the busy street in front of our house. Newspapers report that all over Japan there is an increase in small children being admitted to hospitals. They have asthmatic conditions that are largely attributable to automobile air pollution.

Just a few blocks from my home a street that was suffering chronic traffic jams was widened to add two more lanes. Homes and businesses were torn down to make room

for more cars. Owners were handsomely compensated with tax yen. The new section is now nearly complete, and the heavier volume of traffic is helping to make the city's already acrid air even worse.

For me this typifies the way the Japanese Government deals with environmental problems. Congestion is dealt with by street-widening, rather than by cutting traffic volumes. This is classic 'technofix', leaving the causes – and the system – intact.

Pollution and effluent are good business. Japan aims to be the world's leading vendor of pollution abatement technology – smokestack scrubbers and effluent purification units. Companies that have installed a large number of units to eliminate sulphur and nitrogen emissions in Japan are now selling the technologies to other countries, particularly in Asia.

I once had the pleasure of covering an international environmental symposium featuring ministers and other assorted luminaries from Asian countries. Mr. Aoki Masahisa, then director-general of Japan's Environment Agency, delivered an address stressing Japan's dependence upon the bounty of nature. Japan, he said, imports more petroleum, lumber, cotton and wool than any other country, consumes fully one-third of all the world's shrimp... and there was a lot more.

At the end of this awesome list I fully expected him to say: 'It is thus incumbent on us to reduce consumption in order to live more easily on the earth.' But instead he outlined a programme to expand the use of Japanese pollution abatement technologies.

The conference agreed on the need for a more intensive management of nature in Asia. The ecological crisis had to be countered. But raw materials for an expanding consumer culture were still required. Japan would provide the management technologies and the cash. Mr. Kira Tatsuo, director of the Lake Biwa Research Institute, proclaimed the need to find fast-growing species of tropical trees and make them grow even faster.

Last April Japan's major business organisation, the Federation of Economic Organisations – commonly known as *Keidanren* – published its *Keidanren Global Environment Charter* with great fanfare. 'The business world, academic circles, and government,' it concluded, 'must pool their resources to create innovative technologies for preserving the environment, conserving energy and cutting back on resource consumption.' Official Guidelines' exhort companies to care for the ecosystem, conserve resources, appoint executives and create organizations. Many companies already have 'environmental offices' or the like – but to no obvious avail.

For, quite predictably, nowhere is there a hint that corporations might do much more for the earth by producing *less*. Technofix must satisfy the need for conservation *without* lowering production. So the only way to cut consumption of resources and energy is with technological breakthroughs.

That's the theory, anyway. But what are Japanese corporations actually doing? The Japanese auto industry is making great efforts to come up with new lean-burn engines and other technological innovations. They will help Japanese car makers

to expand in countries like Thailand, which are already choking on heavy traffic and horrific air pollution. New technology will give the developing Asian countries an excuse to sidestep the need to reduce the number of cars and think about development in a different way.

Smokestack emissions are another prime target of technofix efforts. The number of flue-gas desulfurization units in Japan rose from 102 in 1970 to 1,810 in 1988, and denitrification units from five in 1972 to 379 in 1988. But with the advent of the global-warming scare carbon dioxide (CO₂) has grabbed the limelight – 27 per cent of

Japan's CO₂ emissions come from power stations. So this is where the electricity generating industry is now focusing its efforts.

In early May 1989 the Kansai Electric Power Co was the first in Japan to fit a unit that recovers CO₂ from flue gases. Many more have followed suit. At the Tohoku Electric plant in Sendai City an experiment is underway to get algae to consume the CO₂ produced by the plant. These small aquatic plants do indeed consume CO₂ and grow much faster than other plants – but the experiment still has a long way to go. Research is also underway into liquefying CO₂ and storing it on the sea bed at a depth

of 3,000 metres – a plan that has generated much international controversy.

The recovery of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and the search for CFC substitutes are well underway in Japan. But many of the CFC substitutes have high global-warming potential or some other problem, replacing one poison with another. Almost all automobiles now sold in Japan are equipped with air conditioning – yet government expects consumers to take seriously its injunction not to overcool their houses with ozone-destroying air conditioners.

Restoring the rainforests is another recurring theme for Japanese businesses. The most recent scheme is to use biotechnology to create culture mediums for saplings – while Japan continues to hack away at what's left of Third World rainforests.

I was once commissioned to translate a brochure from one of Japan's major construction companies. This was before I knew much about the Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF) except its name. Unfolded before my eyes was a grand plan for 'greening the African desert' by creating huge artificial lakes and pumping them full of sea water. This is just the beginning. The same business and banking consortium is planning a second Panama Canal, the Kra Isthmus Canal to the Gulf of Thailand; a New Silk Road (a superhighway across Asia to Europe); a bridge across the Straits of Gibraltar; a huge Central African lake; a dam across the Bering Strait, and a global network of power stations. These projects, which would be underwritten by Japanese capital, typically combine massive construction costs with high technology supplied by... you guessed it.

According to their promoters these projects will not only save the earth but stimulate local economies. But if the past record of official development assistance projects – or indeed of the 'development' of Okinawa by mainland Japanese corporations – is anything to go by the real profiteers are going to be the companies who implement the projects. Since Third World nations usually have little if any technology, expertise, heavy machinery or materials to offer for use in megaprojects, these typically supplied by First World contractors, with locals doing the stoop labour.

Government is investing heavily in technofix. Take the 'Action Programme to Arrest Global Warming'. Technology has a predictably major role to play in cutting, reducing and fixing greenhouse gases. It is to be used to develop 'agricultural, forestry and fishery technologies, such as the development of breeds adaptable to the environment...' No mention of managing consumption or tackling the underlying causes that are crippling the eco-system.

Another plan of doubtful distinction is

YEN FOR UNDERDEVELOPMENT



Tuna town

Japanese aid is making the traditional Indonesian fishing folk pay part of the steep price of a dish of Sushi.

FRESH tuna – the main ingredient for those favourites *sushi* and *sashimi* – has become a staple in the affluent Japanese diet. The two preferred species of tuna now rank second and sixth amongst all the goods imported into Japan by air. It is thus not surprising that government aid ('overseas development assistance' – ODA) is being used to help land the big fish on Japanese plates.

The Indonesian town of Muara Baru was a sleepy fishing village near Jakarta until it was transformed by 'tuna money'. It is now a busy port fully equipped with a sophisticated fishing fleet, ice warehouses and ice-producing factories. In Indonesia most fishing is still done by sailing vessels that can't go out to the deep ocean after big fish – in any case they are too small to carry tuna. But Jakarta, in its quest for foreign currency, begun to look to tuna as an important export product. By 1983 it was exporting 2,883 tons of the two major species, yellowfin and big-eye, by air to Japan.

Muara Baru's modern port was built with ODA yen. The feasibility study was conducted in 1973 by JICA (Japan International Co-operation Agency). The port was completed in 1984 after receiving a total of 8.3 billion yen (\$64 million). With the port built around the

sophisticated tuna fishery, local fishing people found their traditional livelihood in increasing jeopardy. Now small local boats are no longer able to use the port.

Today Muara Baru's fishing fleet is transformed. It has become international. The largest number of ships is Taiwanese, followed closely by the Japanese and South Koreans. Apart from high-ranking officers, all the crew on the 100-odd Japanese ships are Indonesian. These ships typically go out on two or three month voyages in Indonesian waters, and carry freezing facilities. Freezers allow for about two weeks' storage before the fish is off-loaded, quickly packed and sent raw by air to Japan.

In the evening Muara Baru becomes Jakarta's bustling fish market, but the tuna is almost never eaten on Java. As a marketing strategy Jakarta holds the occasional 'tuna festival' where you can eat fish of a quality usually found only in the famous Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo. But these festivals are aimed at Japanese tourists. The menu of *sushi*, *sashimi*, and tuna-based *tekka-don*, at prices of about 800 rupiats (\$10), is a lot more than most Javanese could ever afford.

A report by the Pacific-Asia Resource Centre in Tokyo.



YEN FOR UNDERDEVELOPMENT



Rogue regime

Japan has defied international opinion and continued to prop up one of the world's most ruthless governments in Burma.

BURMA (Myanmar) is today a country in upheaval. Japan, following the lead of other major donors, cut off its Burmese aid programme in 1989 after the military began to massacre or imprison political opponents.

Unlike other industrialized nations, Tokyo was quick to recognize the military regime.



Assistance resumed following the Burmese elections of 1990. But the Burmese military refused to accept a crushing defeat at the polls by the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD). Instead they formed an ominously-named State Law and Order

Restoration Council (SLORC). Japanese Cabinet Secretary Sakamoto Misoji was moved to call the situation 'unpleasant' when the council placed NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest.

Japan's growing economic power makes it a key aid donor and trading partner throughout the Asian-Pacific third world. Japan is Burma's largest donor, accounting for fully 80 per cent of all official government aid to the military regime. Since 1976, when Burma's stagnating economy forced the country out of its experiment in self-reliant isolation and into the aid market, Japan has contributed approximately \$50 billion. Most of this has been in loans – contributing to Burma's heavy debt burden. By the late 1980s Japanese allotments of development assistance (ODA) rose to \$300 million in loans and \$70 million in grants every year.

Much of this economic aid has gone to Japanese consulting and construction companies, often the real beneficiaries of many Japanese ODA programmes.

Some understanding of why this enormous amount of aid has failed to reverse Burmese decline can be gained by looking at the project to build Hino military trucks. The contracting company is Japanese, and the recipient is the Burmese military. The trucks produced in this project are being used to both repress demonstrations in the cities and carry out military operations against guerrilla armies in the border regions. The profits go to Japan – all the Burmese are left with is a heavier debt burden and an even stronger military.

A report by the Pacific-Asia Resource Centre in Tokyo.

to have unlimited research funds...' is the conclusion. 'More research' has always been the rallying cry of procrastinators.

The Japanese economist Shibata Kai has identified what he calls 'a law of the calamity of destruction'. In a nutshell, he argues that both socialism and capitalism are engaged in a hopeless struggle to stave off ecological calamity; a struggle which in effect only worsens the crisis to come. Maintaining a modern industrial infrastructure requires vast amounts of resources and energy – more than the global eco-system can possibly sustain. Putting a scrubber on a smokestack may appear to solve the pollution problem, but it actually leads us into an ever-widening spiral of resource/energy depletion and pollution.

Technological solutions are the centrepiece of Japanese industrial and corporate policy. Without technofix their industrial regime would be unthinkable in this overpopulated island of limited and shrinking reserves of energy and resources.

But this is no justification for technofix. Rather, it is an urgent signal to Japan's leaders – and to those of the rest of the world – that they had better come up with something else, and fast. Sooner or later we shall reach the breaking point, where the technofix will no longer work – and then it will be too late. ■

Rick Davis is the editor of the *Japan Environment Newsletter*.

RECIPE FOR TECHNOFIX

(1) First take a large pot of public credibility. The public is easy to convince because it wants to be convinced, and the Japanese are enraptured by the possibilities of technofix because of their abiding faith in science and technology. Believing that a solution has been found, we can carry on without changing our ways.

(2) Finely chop several large chunks of leading-edge technology to keep oneself at the forefront of high-tech development.

(3) Add a dash of national prestige. Japan's high-speed trains, like the US space shuttle, are talismans of modernity.

(4) Season liberally with cash. Technofix means profits. While there is little money to be made in eliminating the causes of cancer or pollution, the research and the marketing of cures is big business. As long as we stick to our nasty habits, there will always be a big market for panaceas and placebos.

(5) Stir in unlimited desires. With added biotechnology we can remodel everything from microbes to domestic animals and trees to make them produce still more for human consumption.

Cook with global warming. Serve with business-as-usual to stave off that ecological heart attack for a couple more years at least.

'New Earth 21'. The Japanese name of this plan literally means 'Earth Regeneration Plan', testimony to the noble intent of its creators. It is a closely guarded secret by the Government. It ignores ecological salvation through contraction – reduced consumption and living lighter on the earth – in favour of solving global environmental problems through further expansion.

The Government's energy research and development budget is a good illustration of blind faith in technology. It is based on the assumption that the only way to stop global warming is through nuclear power, 'because it has no CO₂ emissions'.

Seventy per cent of the environment budget for 1992 relates to energy – 62 per cent to nuclear power. If you include projects by the Science and Technology Agency and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), fully 80 per cent of the combined energy budget is concerned with the devel-

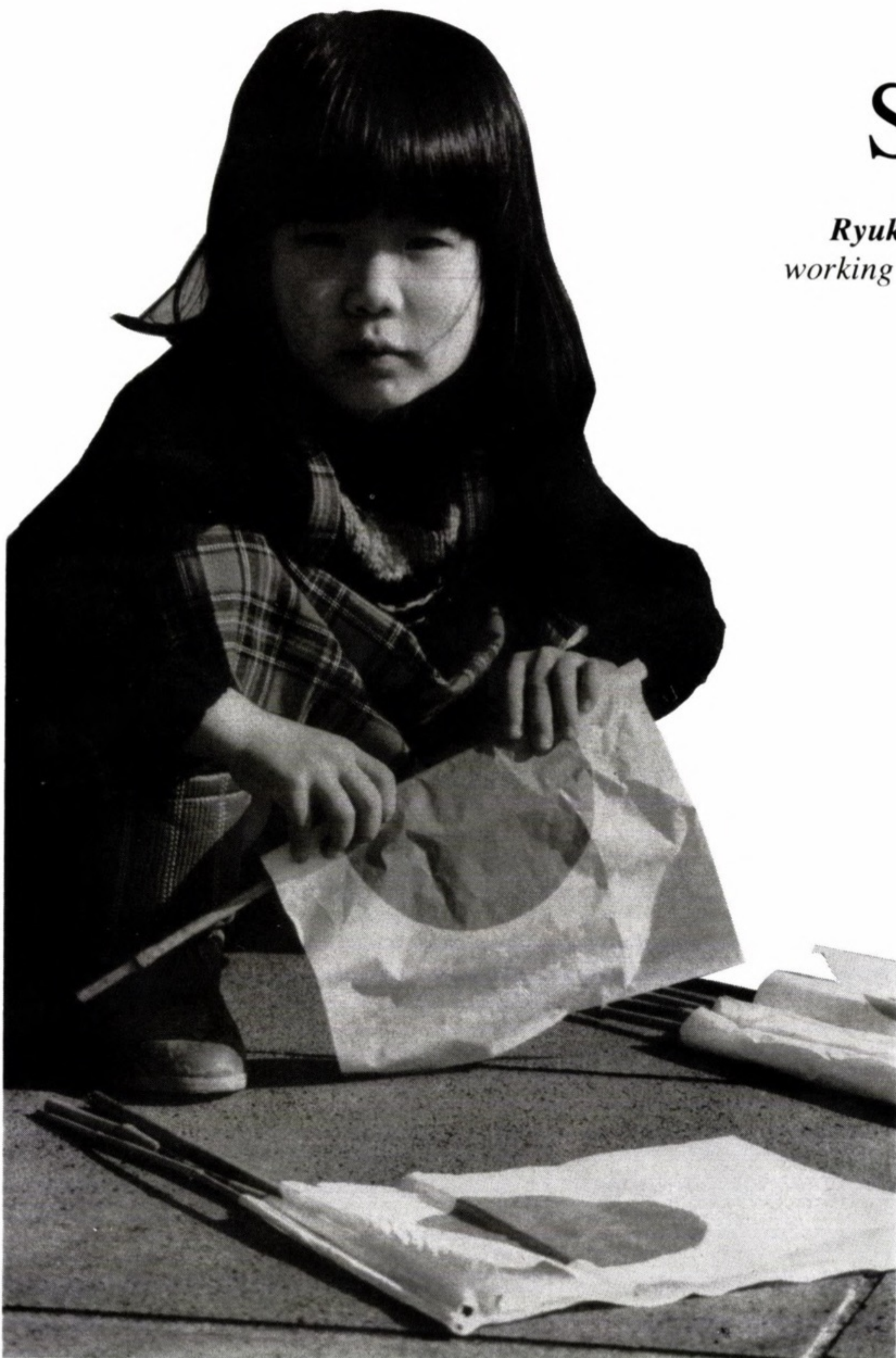
opment and promotion of nuclear power. The Science and Technology Agency's projects take in fusion research, fast breeder research, development of spent nuclear fuel reprocessing technologies, and even the massive clean-up job on the miserably failed nuclear-powered research vessel *Musu*.

That, to the Japanese Government, is protecting the global environment. Meanwhile, only minuscule amounts of money are budgeted for the research and development of new and renewable energy sources. The budgets for alleviating air and water pollution have actually been cut back.

An editorial in the prestigious *Japan Times* reflects the official view of the powerful mandarins in charge at MITI. Instead of shutting down some of the non-nuclear power plants MITI plans to connect 'photochemical bioreactors' to them to 'eliminate the carbon dioxide in smoke emissions and... produce useful materials'. 'We need

Some choice

Ryuko Kubota confronts the dilemma facing working women in Japan – a family or a career.



RICHARD KALVER / MAGNUM

MRS Sekiya is a Japanese *Sengyo-shufu*, a full-time 'housewife'. When I was giving her daughters tuition in English in the evenings I seldom saw her husband. He works for a leading company and usually comes home after midnight, leaves for work early in the morning, goes out to work on Saturdays and sleeps 'till afternoon on Sundays. He does little housework and spends little time with his family.

Mrs Sekiya's arrangement is found in many Japanese homes. The long working hours expected of male workers leave married women few options for sharing housework and childrearing or being able to contemplate work outside the home. The male work ethic is neatly complemented by the domestic role demanded of women.

There are also *Kengyo-shufu*, housewives who are part-time workers. My aunt Keiko, who used to be a kindergarten

teacher before she married a company employee, now has two children who go to university. She started doing manual work for a small firm a few years ago. She wants to earn money to help pay off housing loans and to help her children with their fees.

But if at first sight the role of *Kengyo-shufu* seems relatively liberating, in practice it is not. Like my aunt Keiko, such women have often finished taking care of their young children. But they are still expected to be in charge of household duties. From the point of view of employers they compensate for the shortage of manual labour by working for low wages with few benefits and little job security. The *Kengyo-shufu* neatly combines capitalist interests with patriarchal expectations about household duties.

More and more women are indeed getting higher degrees, full-time jobs in once

male-dominated fields and leadership positions at work. Yet there are obstacles before a career-seeking woman in Japan, and they are the product of patriarchal values and the Japanese work environment. Such obstacles leave many women feeling they have little choice but to become housewives.

Women are now expected to work as hard as men. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law, in effect since 1986, abolishes the prohibition of women's late-night labour and the limitation on extra work, forcing female workers to accept a workload as heavy as that of their male colleagues.

Without a reduction in male working hours, a better day-care system and equal sharing of housework with husbands, women are forced to choose: stay single and work as hard as men, or get married and depend completely on your husband's income, with maybe a little insecure part-time labour on the side. More and more women choose to stay single. Some Japanese farmers and small businessmen are now arranging marriages with women from other Asian countries, because of the unwillingness of Japanese women to take on the workload marriages to such men imply.

My experience as a teacher at a public junior high school in a rural area was far from free of gender prejudice, though equality is theoretically guaranteed to public servants. One instance comes to mind vividly. The vice-principal asked all the female faculty at the beginning of a school year to 'take turns to make tea for teachers before school starts'. We were appalled and simply ignored his request.

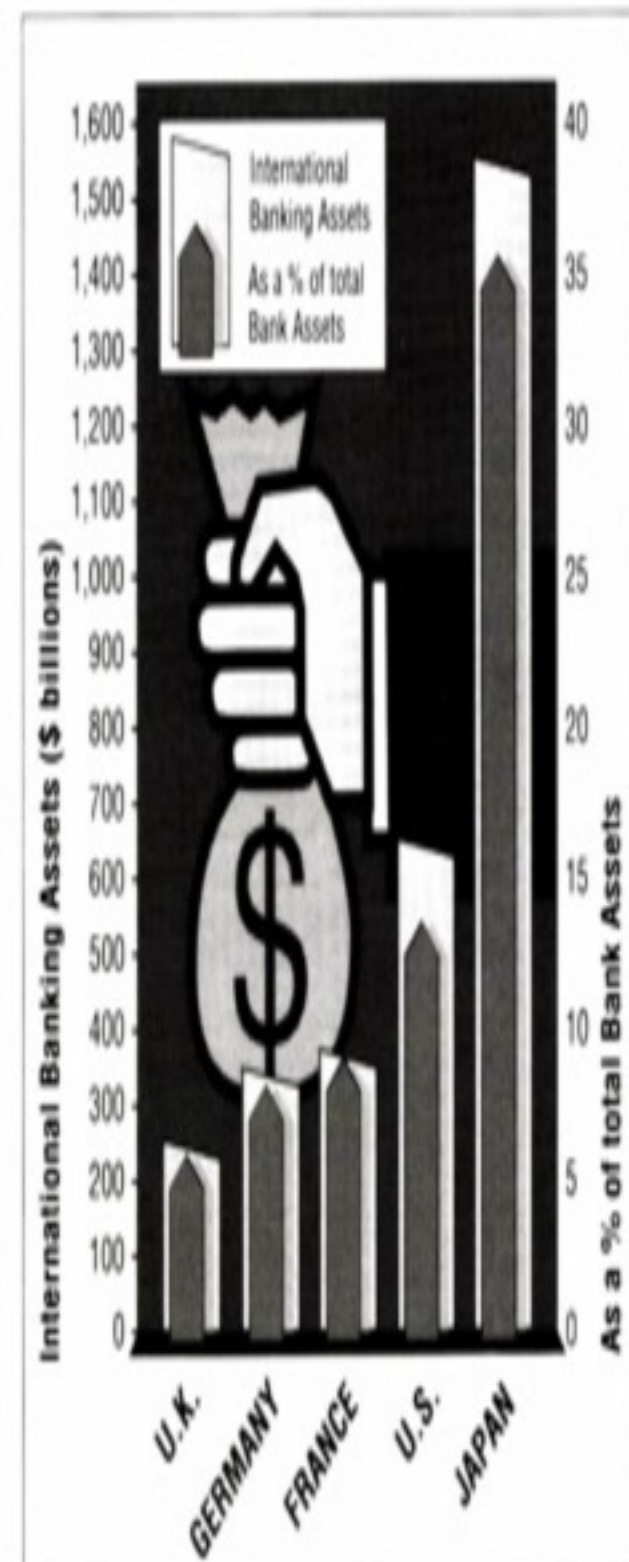
For some Japanese women being good wives and wise mothers – a highly venerated role – is enough. It gives them rewards and certain privileges. These come, however, from the choices imposed on women by the legal and economic system. They can choose to work as intensely as men, but that choice almost automatically excludes the possibility of having a family.

So the task of increasing Japanese women's participation may be as much a question of reducing men's working hours and getting them to share household and child-rearing responsibilities as of achieving more equal opportunities at work. ■

Ryuko Kubota is a university teacher in Monterey, California.

Economic Miracle

The Japanese make up 2.6% of the world's population who live on 0.1% of its inhabitable area yet produce 10 per cent of world economic production. They are quickly becoming the world's dominant economic power.¹

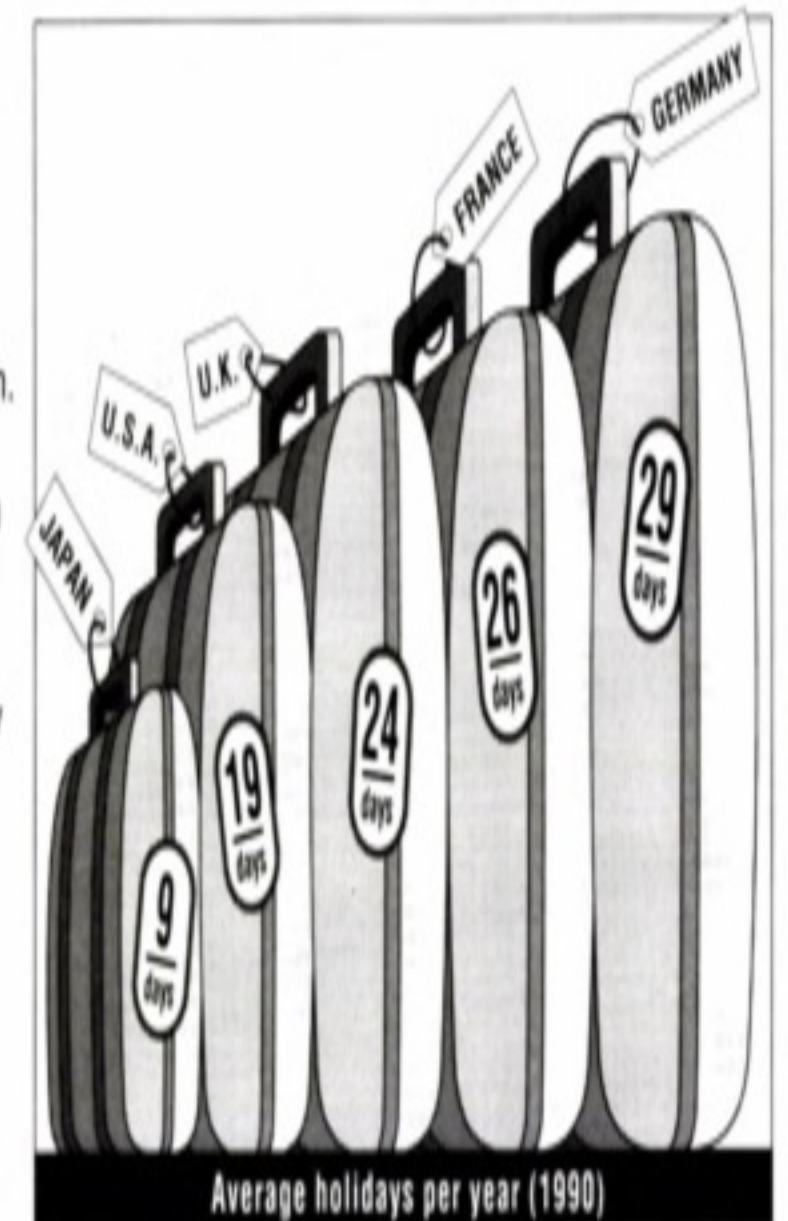


- The Tokyo stock exchange now equals the total size of the New York, Frankfurt, London, Paris, and Toronto stock exchanges combined.²
- Land inflation in Japan has reached the point where the market value of all Japanese land is double that of all US land even though US is 25 times as large.³
- Japan has a vibrant domestic economy. Less than 15% of Japanese GNP is exported compared to 29% in the UK.⁴

Work and Leisure^{1,6}

The Japanese workplace is curious mixture of workaholicism and efficiency. But long hours are becoming a source of discontent.

- The average Japanese works between 200 and 500 hours per year more than workers in the rest of the industrial world. Fewer than 20% of full-time workers get two-day weekends.
- Ford has two-thirds more workers and produces only half the cars of Toyota.
- Company presidents' salaries are only 7 times those of new recruits as opposed to 30 to 50 times in the US.
- Women's salaries are only 52% of those of men. But there are 28,000 women who are company presidents.

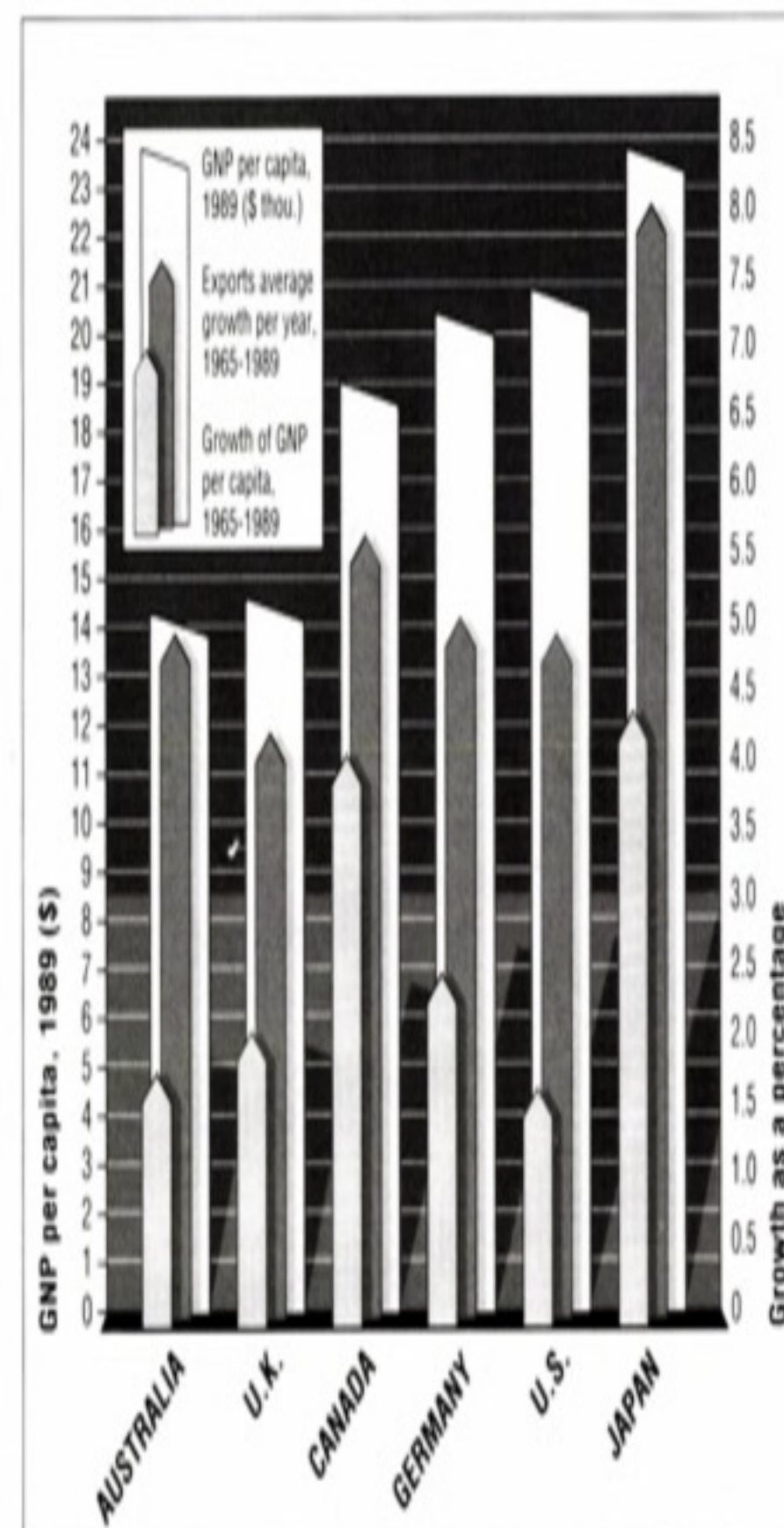


The Rise of Oriental Capitalism

Japan's remarkable success is now a central fact of global economic life. But what has the new prosperity meant for the quality of everyday life for Japanese people? And what does it mean for the rest of the world?

Out in Front

The Japanese are setting the pace in the global growth race whether it is trade surpluses, market share of products sold, or personal income.



Daily Life

Despite growing affluence and disposable income the quality of life for many Japanese remains poor and opportunities limited.

- Some 25% of Japanese marriages are still arranged. Women are expected to be married by age 25 and men by age 27. A middle-class wedding can cost up to \$50,000. Only 50% of women return to work after they are married.⁵



- Over one-third of the Japanese are concentrated on just 1% of the total land.⁶ In Tokyo land prices are 80% of

housing prices. Between 1955 and 1985 land values inflated by an astounding 7,800%. This makes the cost of housing for most urban

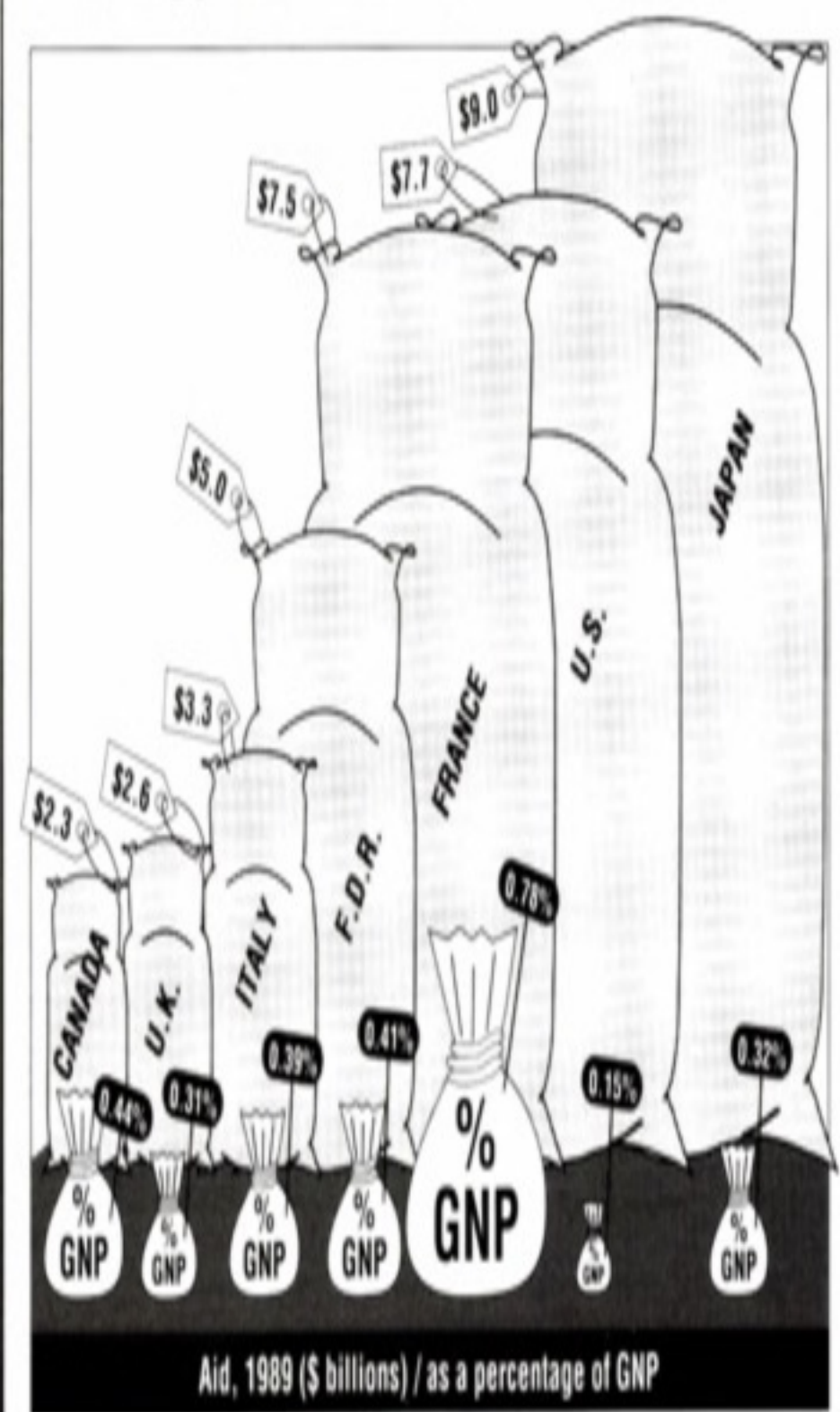
Japanese extremely high.⁷

● Tokyo is twice as expensive to live in as New York and has one-fifteenth the park space of London. Japan has 900 public libraries compared to 5,630 in the UK and 8,500 in the US.⁸

- One-third of the world's tuna and two-fifths of its shrimp pass through Japanese stomachs.⁹

Yen Power

Japanese success means increasing economic muscle outside the country. Japan is quickly becoming both the lender and donor of first resort. Japanese financial institutions are now responsible for a third of all international credit. A single Japanese company, Nomura, was responsible for financing a third of the gigantic US national debt.¹⁰



1 Peter Tasker, *Inside Japan*, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1987. 2 World Development Report 1991, World Bank, Washington. 3 Gavin McCormack, *Australian Outlook*, August 1989. 4 *In These Times*, 12 January 1992. 5 Human Development Report 1991, UNDP, New York. 6 Harel van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, Macmillan, 1989. 7 Gavin McCormack, *New Left Review*, No 188. 8 Gavin McCormack, *Australian Quarterly*, August 1989. 9 Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, Random House, 1990. 10 Yen for Development, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1991.



AUSTRALIAN TOURIST COMMISSION

With the world at its feet: Japanese yen are buying prime tourist real estate throughout Australia.

Konnichiwa, mate!

*That's 'g' day, mate!' in Japanese. **George Fisher** explains why Japan's expansion southwards might soon be changing more than Australia's familiar greeting.*

Recording images for posterity on his new digital camera, Shotaro Saito skims the flickering surface of Sydney Harbour from the deck of a yacht. He knows he will soon be able to drive under the famous harbour through a \$530 million tunnel built by the Japanese firm Kumagai Gumi. He knows too that many of the offices and hotels with the best harbour views are owned by Japanese business houses. At the finest restaurants and merchandise stores throughout the city his Japanese colleagues and friends gather to enjoy the superior power of the yen. On signs, menus and price tags throughout the city Japanese is the

standard second language.

There are now almost 900 Japanese companies in Australia. Fifty thousand Japanese live and work here and 17,000 are permanent residents. Australia has the highest number of people learning Japanese of any Western nation. The country's relationship with Japan is crucial to how the Australian economy integrates into the Asia Pacific region.

Australia's attitude to Japan has shifted a long way in the 50 years since Hirohito's bombers lashed the northern Australian coastline. Ten years after the war Australia began exporting wool and wheat to Japan;

then from the 1960s iron, coal, beef, aluminium, natural gas and uranium.

Recurring xenophobic fears of the yellow peril have long haunted Australian popular culture. But the impact of Asian investment has continued to help the Australian economy long after it had been deserted by its wartime allies. The inflow of capital from Japan has for several years far exceeded that from any other country. In 1989-90 there was a net outflow of capital from Australia to the US and Britain, but a substantial inflow (\$5.17 billion) from Japan.

But unlike UK or US investors, who have put about 60 percent of their money into manufacturing, the Japanese have sunk 90 per cent of their yen into real estate and tourism. Around 500,000 Japanese visit Australia each year. Most end up on the sun-drenched sands of Queensland, where many of the multi-million dollar resorts are owned by Japanese consortia.

Shotaro, and others like him, are shaping a new future for Australia in its relationship with its geographic neighbourhood. If Australia is to break free from its blanket-hugging relationship to the UK and the US it will have to come to terms with the fact that its future lies in Asia. As Australia National University's Gavan McCormack notes, within seven or eight years there will be four more 'Japans': South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. All more than doubled the size of their economies during the 1980s.

Australia depends on Japanese supplies of manufactured and consumer goods – but could survive without them. Japan, on the other hand, depends on Australia for basic raw materials and would find it difficult to find substitute sources of supply. Japan, as Shotaro's parents remember all too clearly, depends on Australia for food, energy and minerals more than on any other country. In 1990 Australia supplied 40 per cent of Japan's beef and much of its wheat, barley, rye and sugar. It supplied 40 per cent of Japan's iron ore and more than half its aluminium ore.

Australia offers a steady supply of coal for thermal power stations as well as natural gas from the massive North West Shelf, being developed almost exclusively for Japan. Australia also has the world's largest uranium reserves, and Japan relies on nuclear power for a third of its energy consumption. The technology to convert to oil the huge (200 billion tonnes) reserves of brown coal in Victoria has been developed by a Japanese government-financed project.

Some commentators have encouraged an uncritical acceptance of any increased Japanese involvement in the Australian economy. Others urge caution. The Japanese economy has suffered from manipulation of land and stock prices,

speculation and other forms of structural corruption, including the practice of 'sweetheart' deals which bypass government tender. The way social and human needs have been neglected by Japan's rulers and their ambivalence towards democratic principles are cause for concern.

Many Australians also remember the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japan's prewar drive to establish dominance in the region. Shintaro Ishihara, a Japanese nationalist, said recently that such an ideal should be revived. Ishihara added, however, that there would be no need for military action, because if surrounding countries resisted, Tokyo could simply cut off aid and technology.

Shotaro and his colleagues can look forward to travelling between Sydney and Melbourne on a high-speed train, to be financed and built by the Japanese. If they travel further westward to Adelaide, they will be able to work, play and study at the proposed city of the future, the multifunction polis (MFP), a merger of Australian and Japanese business interests.

Prime Minister Paul Keating recently announced that the Australian Government would give \$30 million towards the MFP purely to retain Japanese interest. It is expected to house 50,000 people in energy-efficient 'green' houses. Industries targeted for the MFP include environmental management, telecommunications and information technology.

Many Australians are worried about the implications of a Japanese technopolis on Australian soil. It is being promoted by the Japanese Government, but behind the scenes Japanese banking, industrial and construction interests are active. Even though the MFP aims to pursue remedies for past urban industrial pollution, land salination and marine degradation, the Japanese record on such matters is far from impressive. Technopolises in Japan have been spectacular failures. One example, Mutsu-Ogawara in northern Honshu, was given such environmentally attractive facilities as an oil storage facility, a uranium enrichment plant and a waste disposal dump. No local employment was created, and the local community was virtually destroyed.

Australia has to tread a difficult path. On the one hand, if it tries to live in the shadow of its colonial past it could find itself excluded from the emerging Japan-dominated Asian trading bloc, with potentially catastrophic economic consequences. On the other, uncritical acceptance of Japanese hegemony in the region is not an option. If a blanket endorsement of Japanese plans might be shortsighted, their rejection would be political and economic suicide. ■

George Fisher writes for the NI in Sydney.

Gone fishing

Cate Brett discovers that Japanese interests seem to match Maori ideals in the long battle for indigenous land rights.

TIPENE O'REGAN gazes out across the Italian glass-top table to the lush surrounds of the swimming pool. His enemies would be surprised to find him here, up to his elbows in designer furniture. Surprised too to learn that the owner of this mansion is Japanese and he, a prominent Maori leader, is a guest.

In a few hours O'Regan will head off for more negotiations with the Government for the return of his people's tribal lands. He will represent the Ngai Tahu tribe, which at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 held by far the largest territory in the country. Just 20 years later the Ngai Tahu had sunk into a landless poverty from which they have yet to emerge.

Redressing the crafty misdeeds of the British colonialists who conquered, stole or tricked their way into possession of land and fisheries is O'Regan's mission. In this he is helped by the Japanese. Specifically, by a medium-sized Japanese conglomerate. O'Regan sees no irony in taking capital from a nation seen by many as the neo-colonial power of the South Pacific.

'The aim has been to recapitalize us in our own landscape. As a tribal community we have been desperately short of capital for a very long time. We have friends in Japan who have dealt with us on a very generous basis, trusting in our capacity to meet our debt obligations. No New Zealand financial institution or government has ever dealt with us as honourably.'

The fact that the Ngai Tahu have used Japanese capital to support the huge costs of litigation for the return of tribal lands is of no great significance to O'Regan: 'Japan is extremely interested in the business of cultural maintenance. The people we are dealing with are not giving foreign aid.'

Cynics might interpret Japanese interest in joint venture fishing deals with Maori as little more than astute business strategy with an eye to the future. Maori legal claims to their traditional fisheries and the wider resource base have thrown the Pakeha (white) fishing industry into a tailspin in recent years. Given the trend in Aotearoa to cancel foreign fishing licenses

inside its 200 mile exclusive economic zone, a joint venture will be imperative if Japan is to retain access to local fish stocks. The local fishing industry can also ill afford to spurn joint ventures if it wants to continue supplying the vast Japanese domestic market – by far Aotearoa's largest customer for fish products.

O'Regan is scathing about Pakehas who protest loudly against such Japanese investment in Aotearoan resources, saying that most are motivated by the same ignorance and racism which has clouded Maori-Pakeha relations for 150 years. Recent and proposed investments by Japanese companies in commercial real estate and tourism has unleashed an alarming level of xenophobia among middle-class Aotearoans. By world standards Japanese investment in Aotearoan tourism and infrastructure, rural land and real estate is small change; just \$270 million in the past financial year.

The former Labour Government actively pursued Japanese investors as potential purchasers of state forests, telecommunications systems and tourist facilities. Pakeha concern for economic sovereignty and environmental purity has a hollow ring for the likes of Tipene O'Regan. He has seen his people relegated to Third World status in their own land. He sees yen as no different to dollars. 'I don't think total economic subservience is a necessary consequence of foreign investment.'

O'Regan is convinced that the Ngai Tahu will continue to form mutually beneficial relationships with Japanese and other foreign investors who recognize the *Rangatiratanga* (sovereignty) of Maori people. 'The thing that makes Japan very attractive to us is that they do think very long term there. We have a planning horizon of 2030, and our major corporate associate in Japan has a planning horizon of 2025. Finding anyone in New Zealand looking past the end of the financial year is difficult. Japanese and Maori, we both see ourselves as being here for the duration.'

Cate Brett writes from Christchurch, Aotearoa.



Tipene O'Regan (third from right): A mission to regain possession of tribal lands.

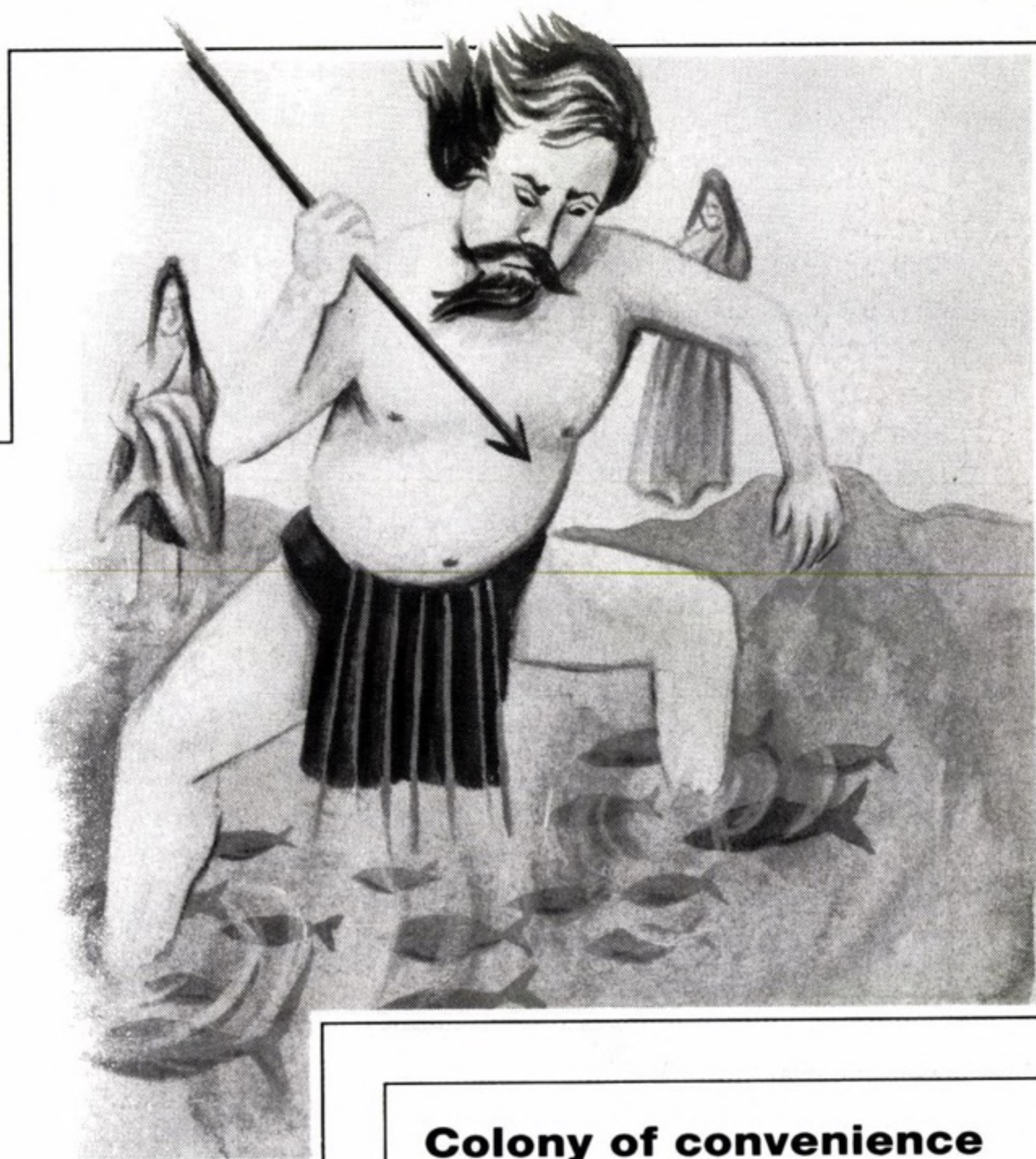


Simply

A history of **Japan**
and its neighbours

From Ainu to emperor

The Ainu, the indigenous people of Japan, probably came from the east Asian coast. They were driven from southern Japan by waves of invading armies who also migrated from the mainland. According to nationalist legend the first emperor of the Japanese was Jimmu Tenno, the great grandson of the god Ninigi. After defeating the Ainu he set up a capital near Kyoto in 660 B.C. The prestige of the emperor is rooted in the ancient chronicles of Kojiki and Nihon Shoki that claim god-like ancestry for the imperial family and the Japanese themselves. But the power of the emperors has always been largely mythical. Real control lay in the hands of the Fujiwara family and then other shoguns (feudal lords) who maintained it through the astute application of military force. It was in this era that the traditions of the samurai and shoguns flourished.



Colony of convenience

In the fourth century AD the Empress Jingu sent the first of many Japanese armies to Korea and established a colony. For 200 years Japan played a central role in Korean affairs. In 1592 the Japanese feudal lord Hideyoshi invaded again – partly to prevent rebellious warriors from causing trouble at home. The invasion imposed appalling misery on the people of Korea. In 1877 Japan tried once again to turn Korea into an economic colony. The Koreans resisted but were gradually overcome and annexed outright by 1910. During the Second World War, Japan took some 200,000

Korean, Chinese and Burmese women as slave labour – tens of thousands of whom were forced to provide sexual services to Japanese troops. A legacy of Korean contempt for all things Japanese continues to this day.



Biting the hand that feeds

Chinese ideas and influences have helped shape Japanese culture more than any other. Japan adopted the Chinese script for its own use. Both Confucianism and Buddhism were imported into feudal Japan. From the 7th to the 10th century, the rulers of Japan were deeply impressed by the magnificence of the T'ang Dynasty. This period marked the first great 'borrowing' by the Japanese from an outside culture – adapting what they took to their own needs. The system of centralized, hierarchical Chinese government was also adopted. But the Ashikaga shogunate (1338-1573) witnessed over 3,000 peasant revolts and much local resistance. By the 16th century Japanese seafarers, traders and pirates were the scourge of the Chinese coast. Japan took an increasingly proprietorial interest in China. Starting with the 1931 seizure of Manchuria the Japanese whittled away at Chinese territory. In 1937 they launched a full-scale invasion of northern China culminating in the ruthless sacking of Nanking in December of that year.



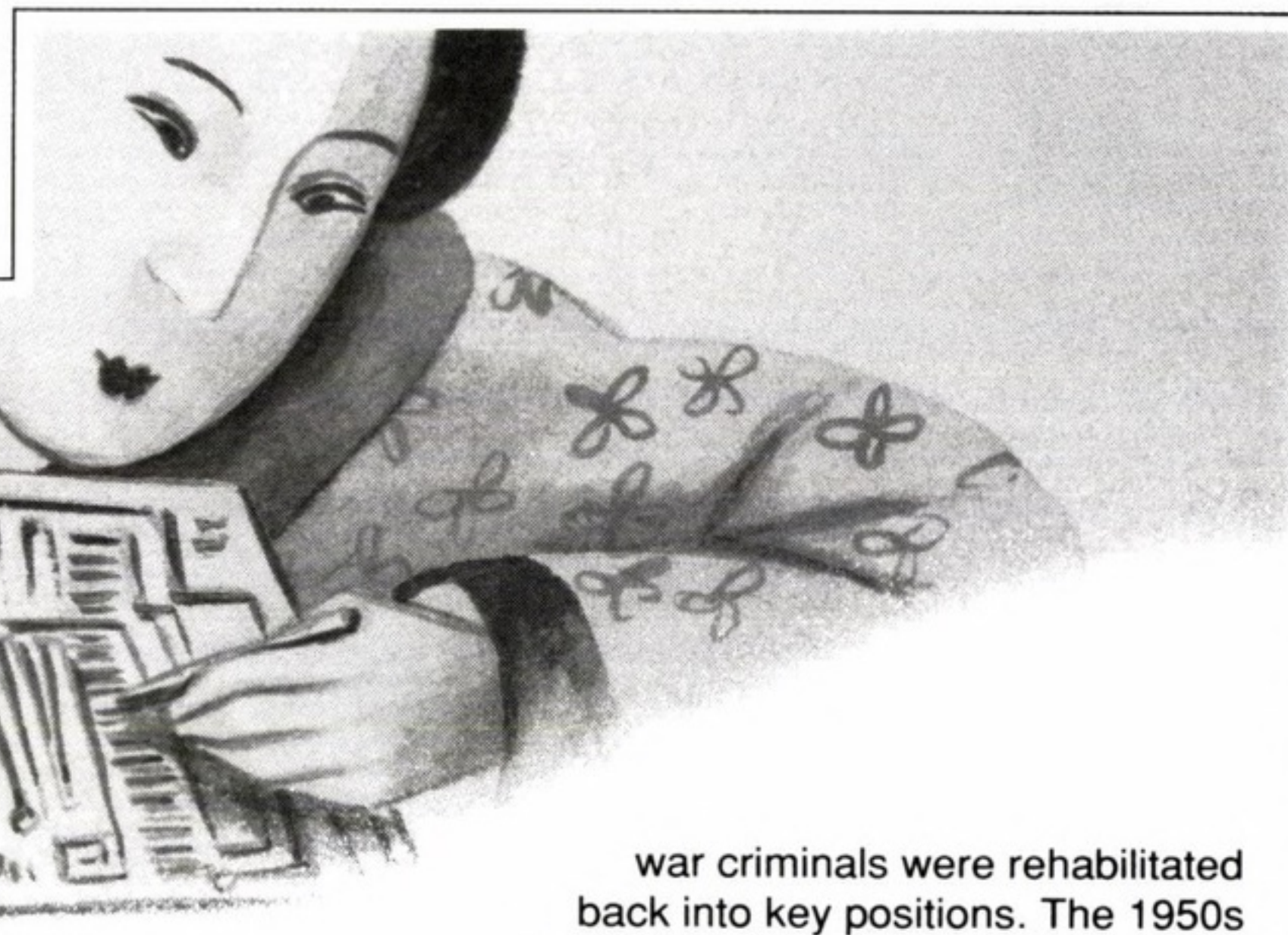
Revolution from above

Portuguese traders first made contact with Japan in the early 1540s. But Westerners were barred from entry. Foreign pressure to get at Japanese coal and other raw materials increased. In 1854 the American Commander Perry arrived with seven warships in Yokohama and forced the Japanese to sign a trading treaty under threat of annexation. In 1868 a group of Japanese reformers under the Emperor Meiji seized power. They believed that the best way to resist Western pressure was for Japan to exploit western ideas to its own advantage: the second great 'borrowing'. In 1871 feudalism was abolished. Modern – if authoritarian – systems of education and administration were set up and industrial expansion took off. The Imperial Russian Navy was routed in 1905. The Meiji restoration shaped the remarkable future economic successes of Japan while severely distorting its democratic development.



Eastern fascism

The Japanese experienced their own version of the roaring twenties – the late Taisho and early Showa periods – known as the era of *Ero, guro, nansensu*, (eroticism, grotesquerie and nonsense). 'Dangerous thoughts' were suppressed by police. In 1923 there was a mass round-up of known communists, anarchists and socialist sympathisers. A militaristic form of state Shintoism promoted emperor worship, ethnocentric ideals and imperial ambitions. Japanese aggression in Manchuria and then China as a whole foreshadowed the totalitarian revision of the Japanese constitution and the fateful attack on Pearl Harbour the following year. Japanese troops swept across Asia from Manila to Rangoon and Japanese bombs even fell on Darwin on the north Australian coast. But the war was brought to an end by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Despite its appalling cost, the Japanese war effort destroyed the myth of white supremacy, and hastened the birth of the new nations of South and South East Asia.



A Pacific Giant Emerges

The post-war US occupation of Japan brought the so-called Peace Constitution. This re-enforced the power of democratic institutions, ended all forms of feudalism, and greatly increased the rights of women. The power of the Japanese military was severely restricted and the emperor was reduced to a purely

symbolic role. These reforms were imposed by the US but supported by most democratic movements in Japan. The nationalist Right still objects to what it calls an 'unJapanese' constitution. By 1948 the objective of the US occupation shifted to rebuilding Japan as a trusted ally in the Cold War. Several Japanese

war criminals were rehabilitated back into key positions. The 1950s and the Korean war saw an enormous influx of aid into Japan. By the 1960s Tokyo was the world's largest city and Japan came to dominate the global car and electronics industries. In the 1980s industrial strength turned into financial clout as Japanese banks dominated global capital markets. But the ultimate meaning of Japanese economic success remains a big question – both for the Japanese and the rest of the world.

Why I quit the company

Tomoyuki Iwashita had what many Japanese dream of – a career with one of the most prestigious companies in Japan. Here he tells why he just couldn't hack it.

When I tell people that I quit working for the company after only a year, most of them think I'm crazy. They can't understand why I would want to give up a prestigious and secure job. But I think I'd have been crazy to stay, and I'll try to explain why.

I started working for the company immediately after graduating from university. It's a big, well-known trading company with about 6,000 employees all over the world. There's a lot of competition to get into this and other similar companies, which promise young people a wealthy and successful future. I was set on course to be a Japanese 'yuppie'.

I'd been used to living independently as a student, looking after myself and organizing my own schedule. As soon as I started working all that changed. I was given a room in the company dormitory, which is like a fancy hotel, with a 24-hour hot bath service and all meals laid on. Most single company employees live in a dormitory like this, and many married employees live in company apartments. The dorm system is actually a great help because living in Tokyo costs more than young people earn – but I found it stifling.

My life rapidly became reduced to a shuttle between the dorm and the office. The working day is officially eight hours, but you can never leave the office on time. I used to work from nine in the morning 'till eight or nine at night, and often until midnight. Drinking with colleagues after work is part of the job; you can't say no. The company building contained cafeterias, shops, a bank, a post office, a doctor's office, a barber's... I never needed to leave the building. Working, drinking, sleeping and standing on a horribly crowded commuter train for an hour and a half each way: this was my life. I spent all my time with the same colleagues; when I wasn't involved in entertaining clients at the weekend, I was expected to play golf with my colleagues. I soon lost sight of the world outside the company.

This isolation is part of the brainwashing process. A personnel manager said: 'We want excellent students who are active, clever and tough. Three months is enough to train them to be devoted businessmen.' I would hear my colleagues saying: 'I'm not making any profit for the company, so I'm not contributing.' Very few employees claim all the overtime pay due to them.

Keeping an employee costs the company 50 million yen (\$400,000) a year, or so the company claims. Many employees put the company's profits before their own mental and physical wellbeing.

Overtiredness and overwork leave you little energy to analyse or criticize your situation. There are shops full of 'health drinks', cocktails of caffeine and other drugs, which will keep you going even when you're exhausted. *Karoshi* (death from overwork) is increasingly common and is always being discussed in the newspapers. I myself collapsed from working too hard. My boss told me: 'You should control your health; it's your own fault if you get sick.' There is no paid sick leave; I used up half of my 14 days annual leave because of sickness.

We had a labour union, but it seemed to have an odd relationship with the management. A couple of times a year I was told to go home at five o'clock. The union representatives were coming round to investigate working hours; everyone knew in advance. If it was 'discovered' that we were all working overtime in excess of 50 hours a month our boss might have had some problem being promoted; and our prospects would have been affected. So we all pretended to work normal hours that day.

The company also controls its employees' private lives. Many company employees under 30 are single. They are expected to devote all their time to the company and become good workers; they don't have time to find a girl friend. The company offers scholarships to the most promising young employees to enable them to study abroad for a year or two. But unmarried people who are on these courses are not allowed to get married until they have completed the course! Married employees who are sent to train abroad have to leave their families in Japan for the first year.

In fact, the quality of married life is often determined by the husband's work. Men who have just got married try to go home early for a while, but soon have to revert to the norm of late night work. They have little



CLIVE OFFLEY

time to spend with their wives and even at the weekend are expected to play golf with colleagues. Fathers cannot find time to communicate with their children and child rearing is largely left to mothers. Married men posted abroad will often leave their family behind in Japan; they fear that their children will fall behind in the fiercely competitive Japanese education system.

Why do people put up with this? They believe this to be a normal working life or just cannot see an alternative. Many think that such personal sacrifices are necessary to keep Japan economically successful. Perhaps, saddest of all, Japan's education and socialization processes do not equip people with the intellectual and spiritual resources to question and challenge the status quo. They stamp out even the desire for a different kind of life.

However, there are some signs that things are changing. Although many new employees in my company were quickly brainwashed, many others, like myself, complained about life in the company and seriously considered leaving. But most of them were already in fetters – of debt. Pleased with themselves for getting into the company and anticipating a life of executive luxury, these new employees throw their money round. Every night they are out drinking. They buy smart clothes and take a taxi back to the dormitory after the last train has gone. They start borrowing money from the bank and soon they have a debt growing like a snowball rolling down a slope. The banks demand no security for loans; it's enough to be working for a well-known company. Some borrow as much as a year's salary in the first few months. They can't leave the company while they have such debts to pay off.

I was one of the few people in my intake of employees who didn't get into debt. I left the company dormitory after three months to share an apartment with a friend. I left the company exactly one year after I entered it. It took me a while to find a new job, but I'm working as a journalist now. My life is still busy, but it's a lot better than it was. I'm lucky because nearly all big Japanese companies are like the one I worked for, and conditions in many small companies are even worse.

It's not easy to opt out of a lifestyle that is generally considered to be prestigious and desirable, but more and more young people in Japan are thinking about doing it. You have to give up a lot of superficially attractive material benefits in order to preserve the quality of your life and your sanity. I don't think I was crazy to leave the company. I think I would have gone crazy if I'd stayed. ■

Tomoyuki Iwashita is currently working as a journalist in Tokyo.



GREENPEACE / CULLEY

Breaking the mould

*Can Japanese activists forge a new relationship of solidarity with Third World peoples? **Colum Muccio** takes an insider's look at the pitfalls and possibilities.*

SHE knew there was something wrong, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. There was a kind of quiet uneasiness around the room. She was a representative of a well-known American non-governmental organisation (NGO) who had come to Tokyo to drum up support for a debt relief plan for the world's poorest countries. She sat at a plain, folding table surrounded by a group of seven representatives of Japanese international NGOs in a very crowded office brimming with books, newsletters and stacks of paper.

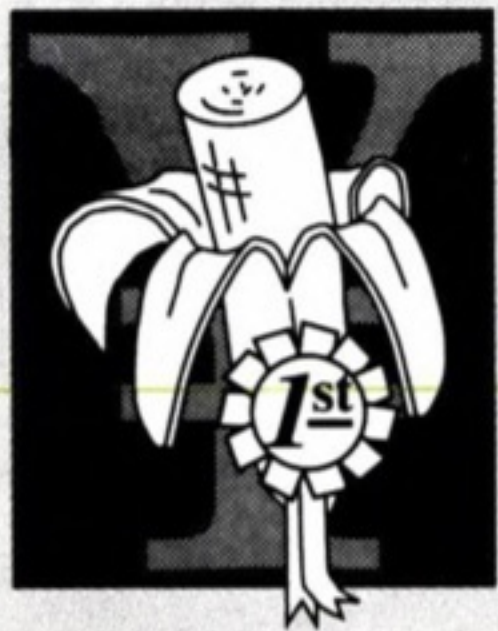
She was addressing the group, encouraging them to lobby the Government, set up

Direct action challenges the whalers but such tactics don't go down well in Japan.

a debt relief committee and start raising public awareness of the Third World debt crisis. She concluded with an open-ended, free-discussion prompt: 'What do you think we can do to get the Government to support debt relief?' Responses were slow in coming. Finally, the moderator of the meeting began: 'Well, as you may know, Japanese NGOs are quite small and...'

She had read statistics in Washington,

PEOPLE'S POWER



Building a better banana

Japanese activists are challenging the plantation barons with a people's trade in the Philippines.

Too often trade with the Third World is a process of unequal exchange. Realizing this, a group of Japanese citizens started importing chemical-free bananas from the Philippines to Japan. Alter-Trade Japan, which started in 1989, now imports between 50 and 60 tons of the fruit, which they distribute through co-operatives, consumer organizations and their parent organization, the Japan Committee for a Negros Campaign. These bananas reach the dining tables of about 50,000 households throughout Japan.

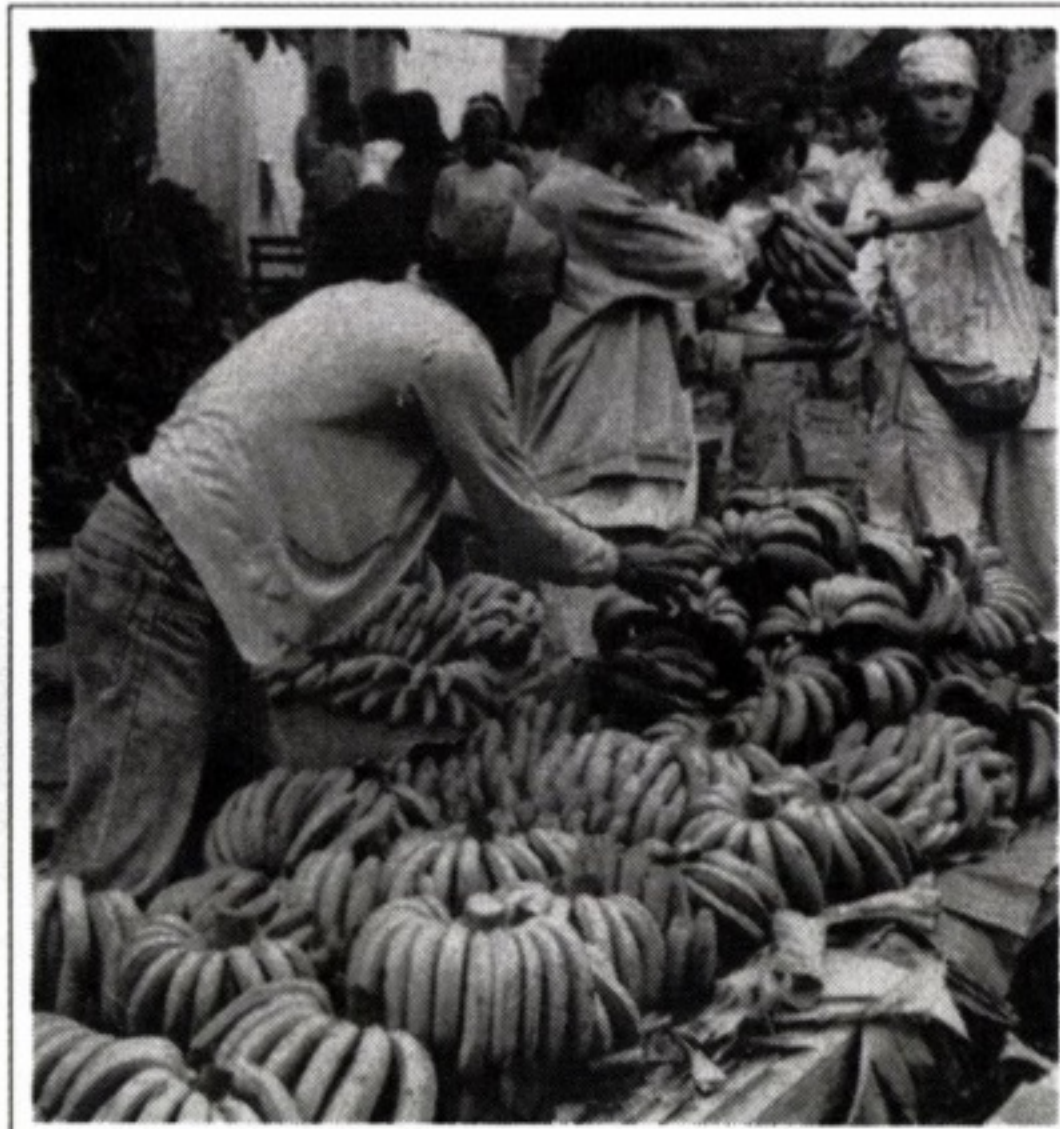
Balangon bananas are a local variety grown on Negros and are more expensive than those produced by the plantations owned by multinational corporations. Nevertheless they have become popular in Japan. One thing they have going for them is that they are organically grown. A citizens' group from Nagoya in Central Japan revealed in the early 1980s that many of the chemicals used in producing bananas in the Philippines were actually banned in Japan. Another reason for the Balangon's popularity is the awareness campaign run by Alter-Trade Japan about the economics and politics of banana production.

Most 'cheap' bananas come from Mindanao in the southern part of the Philippines. Prices are kept low by Japanese and American corporations who undercut local producers, take over their land and turn local farmers into notoriously low-paid agricultural labour. The farmers become virtual prisoners of the plantation economy – they no longer own their own tools; they must rent their homes from the company and buy their groceries at the company store. Middlemen monopolize the means of transportation and thus can dictate the price of products.

It finally dawned on a group of activists that there could be alternatives to this system. One of the major forces behind Alter-Trade network was the solidarity campaign with the people of Negros, an island well-known for sugar plantations where major layoffs occurred in the 1980s. UNICEF reports from 1985 showed

that 150,000 people were living at starvation levels while 260,000 square kilometres of sugarcane fields lay idle.

Originally the idea was to import brown sugar. Surpluses from this grassroots trade, bypassing existing commercial routes, were used to bolster producers' economic independence. The profits made from Japanese sales were ploughed back in to improve production facilities and transport. Currently 120 tons of



this sugar are exported to Japan annually and European groups have followed suit, importing more than 240 tons.

But bananas proved more difficult than sugar. Initial difficulties included the need for rapid transportation – the fruit had to reach Manila within 36 hours of picking. The taste of the first shipment was also disappointing. But by working with the 1,000 producer families, the Alter-Trade network gradually built up a system that could produce a satisfactory crop, bring it to Japan and pay an adequate price directly to the producers.

A report by the Pacific-Asia Resource Centre in Tokyo.

but somehow the reality had not sunk in. To clarify the situation, she went around the table asking the members questions: 'How large is your staff?' Five out of the seven groups represented had a paid staff of under three; the remaining two had purely volunteer staff. 'How large is your annual budget?' All were under \$300,000 and two were under \$100,000. 'Do you have tax-free status?' No.

As startling as these facts are, they're only half the story. Most Japanese NGOs have no legal status at all. The expatriate director of the Japanese branch of a well-known NGO is unable even to get a work

visa and has to leave the country every three months to renew his tourist visa. Many NGO workers, including directors of prominent NGOs, are forced to moonlight one or two days a week to make ends meet.

Despite the fact that Japan is now one of the world's leading aid donors – at least in terms of quantity – the NGO sector is, by western and even southern standards, quite small. In 1988, the Japanese Centre for International Co-operation (JANIC) conducted a study showing that the average budget of the 111 internationally-active NGOs was just \$522,000. Just 28 of them – those with legal status – accounted for three

quarters of the total budget: Foster Parents Plan of Japan and the Japan Committee for UNICEF for almost one half.

The average budget of the remaining 83 NGOs – those without legal status – was \$140,000. The cost of living in Japan shrinks this figure even further. The average number of staff in all 111 NGOs was just three in Japan and two in the field.

There is much talk among the Japanese NGO community about their small size and the lack of public support. Some suggest that the Buddhist tradition is less activist-oriented than that of Christian religions and lacks a missionary tradition; others that the Japanese population is very homogeneous and inward-looking. There are few immigrants to lobby for assistance to their home country. There is perhaps more of a tendency to ask 'why don't we take care of our own people first?' than in western countries.

No culture of dissent

Japan's remarkable economic growth has not followed the standard western paradigm. The Japanese model is generally less adversarial, with government, corporations and citizens co-operating to achieve the same goal. There is less of a culture of dissent. Most people have not fought for their rights as much as in the West. The population is more homogeneous, there is less ethnic tension and the benefits of development are more evenly spread than in most other parts of the world.

There is no culture of dissent in Japan; or, to put it another way, the costs of not conforming are very high. One NGO worker told me that he had graduated from one of the best universities in Japan and, because he went to work for an NGO rather than join a prestigious corporation as he was expected to, his family refuses to speak to him. Non-profit and NGO work is not seen as a 'regular' profession. It's a one-way ticket to work in the NGO sector, and there's no way back. Japanese NGO workers seem more idealistic and even headstrong. Such qualities are necessary to those who would stand against the current of conformity.

But this situation is changing fast. Japanese NGOs are facing intense pressure from many directions to grow and diversify. Flooded by funding requests from southern NGOs, they are being pushed by western and international NGOs to take action on a broad range of issues and initiatives of which they have little experience.

Japanese governments have recently encouraged the people to 'internationalize'. Some say the result is little more than English classes and holidays in Bali rather than Okinawa. But NGO leaders have been encouraged by an increased interest of young people in international issues. The



Japanese corporate culture expects life-long loyalty.

government and business sectors have also expressed interest. But many NGO leaders are wary of these overtures as attempts to co-opt NGOs into the system.

The normal aspiration in Japan is still for 'lifetime employment'. Part-time and volunteer work is, if not prohibited then strongly frowned on as an indication of lack of commitment. Recent media reports suggest, however, that this tradition may be slipping and that more people are now changing jobs and professions.

Many obstacles remain to developing vital and respected NGOs. One of the most frequently mentioned is funding. Japanese NGO fundraising skills are still in a stage of infancy. NGOs are experimenting with various gimmicks and marketing schemes, but they still have a long way to go.

Tough job

They also have difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. They can offer only a fraction of the salary and security that government or private firms can, and must rely heavily on volunteers, housewives, retirees and college students who have not yet entered the ranks of 'salarymen'. Kouichi Yanagida, Secretary General of the Defence of the Green Earth Foundation and a man who worked closely with the victims of the Minamata mercury poisoning says: 'There is a lot of moonlighting. Salary levels are much lower in NGOs than in the rest of the economy. Many well-qualified people have expressed interest in working with the Foundation but have gone to work for the corporations instead.'

There is a legal obstacle too. According to Japanese law, non-profit status can only be granted if an organization has an endowment of at least \$2.3 million or, if it is a membership organization, its dues exceed \$400,000 annually. Both of these requirements are impossible for most Japanese NGOs to fulfil. So they remain in legal limbo: neither private nor non-profit.

Branches of foreign NGOs working in Japan face their own peculiar set of obstacles. Even for those fluent in Japanese, getting things done can be very difficult and frustrating. Many NGOs have had to adjust their strategies to match Japanese tastes. According to Michi Mathias, director of Greenpeace Japan: 'Direct action campaigns such as blocking ships – which are good for getting an issue raised and debated in many countries – often cause more harm than good in Japan. They're seen as too serious, too confrontational. We rely more on information campaigns on environmental and nuclear issues.'

The media work differently in Japan as well. 'Because of the press club system here,' says Michi, 'it is more difficult to get the views of non-official organizations into the papers. It's not in the reporter's interest to go out and find contrasting or opposing viewpoints. That will hurt the paper. We once had an article about one of our studies scheduled to be reported by a certain newspaper, but it was scrapped at the last minute when the Government released their own version the same day. The paper just couldn't print ours too.'

Finally, Japanese NGOs face the same dilemmas that are faced, to varying degrees, by NGOs throughout the world. Should they stay small and retain a 'grass-roots' feel? Or should they grow, expand their influence, and become more political? Should they accept government and large-donor funding and risk losing their autonomy? Is 'small' beautiful or weak?

As Michio Ito, Secretary General of JANIC said; 'It's still not clear whether the Japanese NGO sector – or any other grass-roots Japanese movement – will take root and grow, or be swept away by strong group forces that exist in Japanese society.'

Our American NGO visitor's surprise is understandable. How can a country so wealthy and economically influential as Japan have such a small and struggling NGO sector? Yet some understanding and sympathy must also go out to those Japanese working in NGOs. They work in a less favourable environment and have more to lose by their choice of professions than their Western counterparts. They must struggle to bring about not only political and economic reforms but fundamental changes in social attitudes and culture. They must develop a culture of dissent where the dominant group appreciates the need for opposing views as a means of regulating the larger system. What is needed is true 'internationalization', where the interests and harmony of the immediate group are waived in favour of the interests of the largest group of all: the global society. ■

Colum Muccio has worked extensively in the Third World and now works for JANIC in Tokyo.

PEOPLE'S POWER

Janakashaber – 'a world not like this'



The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope. *Preface to the Minamata Declaration.*

In the summer of 1989 more than 120,000 people from all over Japan gathered in the Japanese archipelago with 280 activists from 33 other countries. Their modest goal was the forming of A People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21). They held a series of conferences – addressed to farmers, indigenous people, women, consumers, industrial workers – on international affairs and the astounding growth of Japanese foreign aid. Their final gathering was in Minamata, renowned since the 1950s as the site of Japan's first case of industrial poisoning.

A series of projects has emerged from initiatives proposed at the conferences. One proposal criticized the tendency for researchers from industrialized nations to carry out research on the Third World. It resulted in a programme to bring researchers from the South to explore the North. In 1982 a 'Freedom School' dedicated to exposing Japanese people to their relationship with the world was established in Tokyo. After PP21 several more started – in Hokkaido, Toyama, Azumino and Kyushu – spanning the whole length of the Japanese mainland. The Kanagawa Conference, which focused on Japanese Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), called for 'People to People Aid' and proposed that local governments all over Japan give 0.1 per cent of their budgets to recipient-initiated development projects.

The Minamata Declaration issued at the end of the conference called for 'transborder participatory democracy', because 'the 21st century must not be built by the forces of degraded development, but by the forces resisting it'. Participants proposed a new word, *Janakashaba*, to express the dream that 'we can create a society where everyone can live with dignity'. In the local Minamata dialect the word means 'a world not like this'.

The conference constructed a plan to work towards the future. It affirmed the need to continue the process that began in 1989. The next conference, scheduled for Bangkok, Thailand, in November this year, repeats the call for popular development, for 'participatory democracy at the local, national and international levels – making people visible.'

A report by the Pacific-Asia Resource Centre in Tokyo.



Not a hair out of place

NORIKO Matsumoto lives in a suburb of Kobe in Western Japan. Each morning she cleans the flat, makes breakfast for her husband and two children. But any similarity with the lives of many other Japanese 'housewives' ends here when she leaves for a meeting of the *Shin Nihon Fujin no Kai* (New Japanese Women's Group), which promotes peace issues and women's rights. Noriko's time is also taken up with community affairs and agitating for changes in the educational system. This can make her working day a very long one.

Noriko is a rebel, an activist in a country where women are still in many ways treated as second rate. Her modesty belies her knowledge of and compassion for the victimized in her society. She became aware of them as a high school student of 17 and at college met others with similar views.

Just 10 years ago she had to put her opinions into action. When she married she was working as a secretary. She returned to work to find her desk removed, her boss expecting that the beginning of marriage should mean the end of her career. Noriko promptly returned her desk to its original place and went on to win the battle to stay put.

She recently made news with her fight to abolish rules governing the length of students' hair at the local Motoyama High School. In the rigid hierarchy of the education system conformity is the watchword, rote learning and memory the keys to 'success'. There is immense pressure to do well and enter a high-status school or university. Primary school children can spend most of their evenings and weekends attending *juku* (crammer schools). Complete conformity and intense competition produce casualties on all sides, with dire consequences.

In the summer of 1990 a high school girl was killed in Kobe when she was caught between the school gate and a gatepost as she dashed to her first class of the day. The gate was closed on her by a

teacher shutting out latecomers. Rules are, after all, rules. Local papers recently reported the case of a 15-year-old girl who had been punched and kicked to death by four of her classmates because, 'she was not dressed neatly'.

The first thing Noriko and other parents at Motoyama decided to tackle was the question of rules about hair. Says Noriko: 'We decided to give out leaflets at the entrance ceremony, asking people to support our protest against the rule on shaved heads.' Visitors to Japan are often struck by the sight of schoolboys in military-style uniforms sporting convict-style haircuts.

The principal told her that this was not the right time or place to talk about it. He promised to call a meeting to discuss the issue. When he didn't, Noriko collected more than 2,000 signatures in two weeks from people supporting her idea. Then seven children at the school refused to shave their hair from May 1990. Finally the school announced that all rules about the length of hair would be dropped.

For Noriko, problems such as large classes, bullying and truancy still need facing. Aside from education she feels that *karoshi* (death from overwork) is the most serious — and uniquely Japanese — problem facing her society. She knows several women who worry that their husbands might die.

Noriko is a member of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and stood (unsuccessfully) as the only female candidate in a recent local election. She is proud of the JCP. The party has followed its own democratic and independent path, untarnished by the corruption of other parties, left or right. It still commands a relatively large following.

John Potter describes the life of one Japanese woman who won't let the rigid codes of school conduct pass unchallenged.

Above: Campaign poster for Noriko Matsumoto's election in Kobe

With her unassuming and optimistic manner Noriko Matsumoto seems almost refreshingly innocent. She finds it hard to believe that an article like this could be written about someone as 'ordinary' as her. Yet one cannot doubt her commitment to putting right the inequalities and injustices around her. She has no ambitions for her own children. 'But,' she says, 'I'd be happy if they wanted to change society.' ■

John Potter is a freelance writer living in Kobe.

WORTH READING

The monthly *Japan Environment Monitor* publishes updates on the deteriorating ecological health of the island. Its address is 400 Yamanashi-Ken, Kofu-shi, Saiwai-cho, 18-11 Kofu, Japan. *Ampo — the Japan-Asia Quarterly's* address is P.O. Box 5250, Tokyo International, Japan. See its ad in this issue.

The definitive critique of Japan is Harel van Wolferen's *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (Macmillan, London 1989.) *Enigma* is a brilliant marshalling of evidence against nationalist bureaucratic power in Japan. It is only flawed by an ahistorical perspective and the author's unwillingness to see that what he criticizes about Japan exists in large measure in Western society. More sympathetic to the Japanese is Ian Buruma's excellent *A Japanese Mirror: Heroes and Villains of Japanese Culture* (Penguin, London 1985). Also a good read is Peter Tasker's *Inside Japan* (Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1987). Tasker's often amusing account is really an enlightened version of Japan as told from the perspective of its ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

GULF WAR



Filth in the Gulf. Who said the war is over? An oil-coated cormorant killed by the massive oil-slick from Kuwait's sabotaged oil fields.

Desert Storm spillout

Legacy of damage remains

WITH the last burning oil well capped in Kuwait, the environmental damage is far from over.

Sprawling oil lakes and rivers – about 100-150 million barrels of oil-cover 60 per cent of Kuwait's land area, emitting toxic, highly volatile gases which could cause cancer and birth defects.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has predicted a 10 per cent rise in Kuwaiti death rates as a result of the war's environmental effects.

Along 700 kilometres of the fragile Saudi Gulf coastline, bays and mudflats are still clogged with oil, killing sea life vital to the marine ecosystem's survival.

The spawning and nursery grounds of commercial and non-commercial fish species have been destroyed, threatening Iran's fishing industry. Between 15,000 and 30,000 birds are believed to have died as a

result of the oil slicks, and breeding grounds for an estimated 200,000 wading birds are also thought to be ruined.

It is feared that many of the one million migratory birds which travel through the area en route between Europe and Africa will not live once they have touched down. Fish have been spotted with blemishes and ulcers attributable to the oil spills. The humpback dolphin and the finless porpoise are endangered.

The brief burst of life, when the desert becomes covered with flowers during the spring, did not occur last year. Camels have been killed in minefields; birds, frogs and lizards in oil lakes. Bombs have pulverised topsoil. Soils and drinking water have been contaminated.

'Black rain' filled with toxins carried with smoke from the burning wells has fallen as far away as Oman, Turkey, Iran and the south of the former Soviet Union. Black snow has fallen in the Himalayas which could cause premature melting leading to flooding, acidity and fish deaths.

And some people think the war is over. ■

Alexander Norris/Gemini

Chilean guns for Yugoslavia

Top Chilean army officers have been involved in gun-running to Yugoslavia. An 11-ton shipment, labelled 'humanitarian aid' recently discovered in Hungary, consisted of armaments – flouting both the Chilean constitution and the UN arms embargo.



With papers signed by two Chilean generals, the heads of the army's armaments and mobilization divisions, the shipment left the country without any inspection. It was part of a larger shipment valued at more than \$6 million.

The Chilean army chief, General Augusto Pinochet has denied the smuggling charges and refused to punish the officers involved.

World Press Review, Vol. 39 No 2, 1992

ENVIRONMENT



JACQUES HAILLOT / CAMERA PRESS

Some of Mexico City's 20 million inhabitants; a bulldozer adds to the air pollution.

When the dirt hits the fan

New scheme to blow Mexico City out of the smog

EVERYONE agrees desperate efforts are needed to solve Mexico City's infamous pollution problem. But few are convinced by the latest eccentric anti-pollution measure – a giant fan system to blow smog out of the valley.

The scheme was announced by Mexico City's mayor Manuel Camacho on a day

when pollution levels were three times higher than the widely accepted international safety limit.

'This will not be a miracle cure for our problems, but one which we can use as an additional tool for the benefit of the inhabitants of the city,' said Camacho with cautious optimism.

Working under increasing pressure scientists are building two prototype fans to test the viability of the project.

The idea is to heat air in badly polluted parts of the city with an incinerator in the middle of huge circles of fans. This should push the smog-filled air upwards, where it will be blown over the city and the surrounding mountains by the stronger winds that exist at higher altitudes.

One of the scheme's chief architects Heriberto Castillo said: 'The idea consists of creating a column of hot air which would then need to be moved like a whirlwind. If it works, then the pollution level will drop, but we don't know by how much.'

Even if the fan scheme is successful, the root of the problem Mexico City's three million cars and 36,000 industries – will not go away.

The Government currently operates an emergency plan to shut down what are commonly regarded as the city's biggest polluters, halt public transport and keep children indoors when pollution levels are 'highly dangerous'.

The pollution is known to cause long and short-term health problems for many of Mexico City's 20 million inhabitants. ■

Andy Cawthorne

Coffee dregs

By mid-August 1991, the world price of coffee had fallen to \$900 a ton, little more than its price in July 1975 and well below the cost of production for most of the 50 plus coffee-growing countries. The \$15 billion a year world coffee market is dogged by over-supply. World-wide coffee production in 1989/90 was around 93 million 63-kilo bags, but only 83 million bags were bought.

Attempts are being made to resuscitate the International Coffee Agreement which, until it collapsed in 1989, supported prices by regulating the supply of coffee beans coming onto the world market. The agreement collapsed partly because Brazil, which had a quota under the ICA amounting to 30 per cent of world trade, would not agree to a quota reduction enabling other coffee-growing countries to increase their much smaller quotas. The subsequent free-for-all saw countries dumping on the international markets all their stock which had previously built up.

International Agricultural Development Vol 11 No 5 1991

Read my lips – Nigerian style

The March 1992 NI carried a Endquote of startling forthrightness from General Babangida, President of Nigeria. He was, he said, concerned to reinvest sovereignty and power in African peoples. He went on to tell the assembled African heads of state at the 1991 Organization of African Unity Conference that 'democracy is not only an attractive option but a rational and inevitable one'.

Meanwhile, back home in Nigeria, he was muzzling the press. Angered by an embarrassing article in the daily *Lagos News* the Government ordered the arrest and detention of its editor and news editor. On March 13th the two men were released after three days on \$11,000 bail each. The following day 13 journalists on the paper were arrested and the newspaper offices closed down.

On May 29, security agents arrested four journalists working for the *African Guardian*, an independent Lagos newspaper. The reporters, accused of reporting the killing of two students in clashes with the armed forces, were released after 24 days.

On June 29, the Government deported William Keeling, Nigerian correspondent of the *Financial Times* of London, alleging that his reports could 'sabotage the security' of Nigeria. The Nigerian Information Minister Alex Akinyele said that foreign journalists were picking up negative information from Nigerian newspapers. 'I don't censor,' he said. 'Let them write what they want to write. But if anybody does anything that is against the national interest that person will have to answer questions. To criticize Nigeria is to criticize God.'

World Press Review Vol 39 No 2 1992



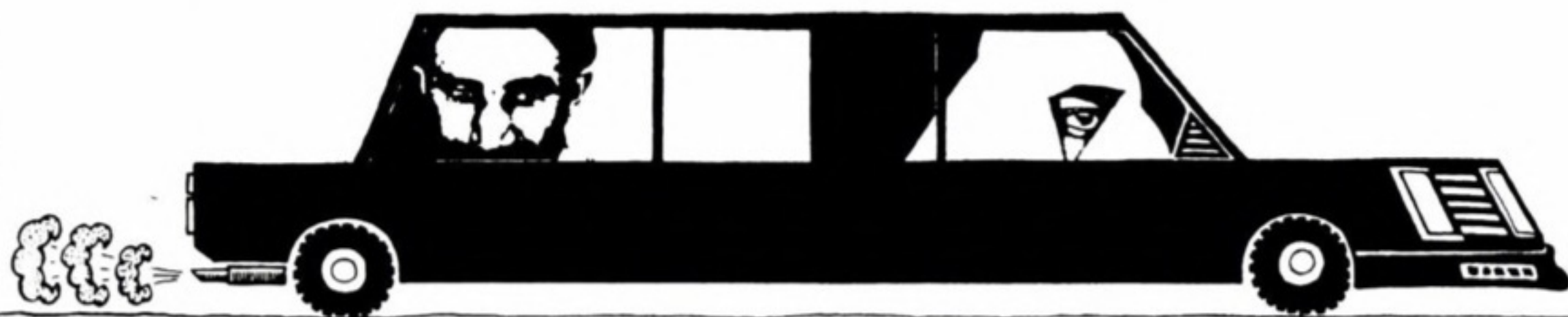
Car recycling

Buyers of new cars in Holland will be charged a recycling fee of up to \$150 by car dealers next year. The charge will fund the collection and recycling of scrapped cars.

A special company, Auto-recycling BV, will be established to collect and recycle the old car frames. Its running costs will be met largely from the proceeds of the recycling levy. Those car-owners who hand in the used vehicles at specified scrap yards will be entitled to rebates of the levy.

New Scientist, Vol 133 No 1810 1992

SAUDI ARABIA



CATH JACKSON / TROUBLE & STRIFE

Tyranny of silence

Human rights abuses

IN October 1990 King Fahd of Saudi Arabia declared that he would implement the major political reforms which prominent citizens including religious leaders had repeatedly petitioned for. Nothing has come through so far.

The Shi'ite minority is particularly discriminated against, and believers in religions other than Islam are allowed neither to worship nor to possess religious symbols.

Many academics have been harassed, interrogated and suspended from their posts for expressing their opinions. In November 1990, 47 Saudi women protested against the unwritten ban on female driving by organizing a convoy of 15 cars in Riyadh. They were

subsequently banned from their professions.

Not content with muzzling its own press – the Saudi media could only report the invasion of Kuwait two days after the event – the Saudi Government tries to influence foreign newspapers and magazines by financial means. Saudi Arabia has the most lucrative government advertising contracts in the Arab world.

Dissenting voices are brutally silenced. Nada Al-Yusuf, a poet, was tortured until she was paralysed following her arrest in 1985 for supporting an opposition political group. Zahra Al-Nasser, a Shi'ite woman, was tortured to death for possessing a prayer book and a photograph of Ayatollah Khomeini. Four alleged members of the illegal Party of God in Hijaz were sentenced to between 7 and 15 years in 1989-90. Their trials, held *in camera*, lasted only a few minutes. Defence lawyers were not allowed. ■

Article 19 Bulletin, 13.

HONDURAS

Fishing fouls

Lobsters lead to clashes

WHEN Honduras became home to the infamous and illegal Contras, relations between many Hondurans and Nicaraguans soured. From their bases in Honduras the Contras could make deadly



ANNIQUE GOLDENBERG

In the background, Honduran fishing boats lined up for a night's poaching in foreign waters. In front, kids will be kids.

raids into Nicaragua and then retreat across the border to safety.

Today the hostility still exists – though the cause is lobsters rather than land mines.

Honduran fisherfolk are increasingly straying into Nicaraguan waters in search of lobster to export to the US, and the stock is becoming depleted by over-fishing.

Clashes have been deadly – so has the overriding of safety precautions to avoid them. For example, a Honduran fishing boat anchored in Nicaraguan waters at night with all the lights off was accidentally rammed by a large cargo boat, killing most of the men on board.

When Honduran boats are spotted by coast guards in Nicaraguan waters, they are likely to come under fire. The usual response is to flee without delay. If any divers happen to be in the water gathering lobster at the time, tough. They are left behind.

'What's the point,' a captain asked us, 'in putting my crew and boat in danger for the sake of a few men?' He might as well have said 'for the sake of a few Waika', the local name for Misquito Indians, for it is they who are the divers. When we asked the same captain whether he ever worked as a diver, he laughed. 'No way would you get me down there,' he said.

Even in Honduran or international waters, the boats are vulnerable targets to pirates who steal the expensive equipment, then blow up the boat. In face of these threats Honduran fishing boats rarely set out without machine guns. ■

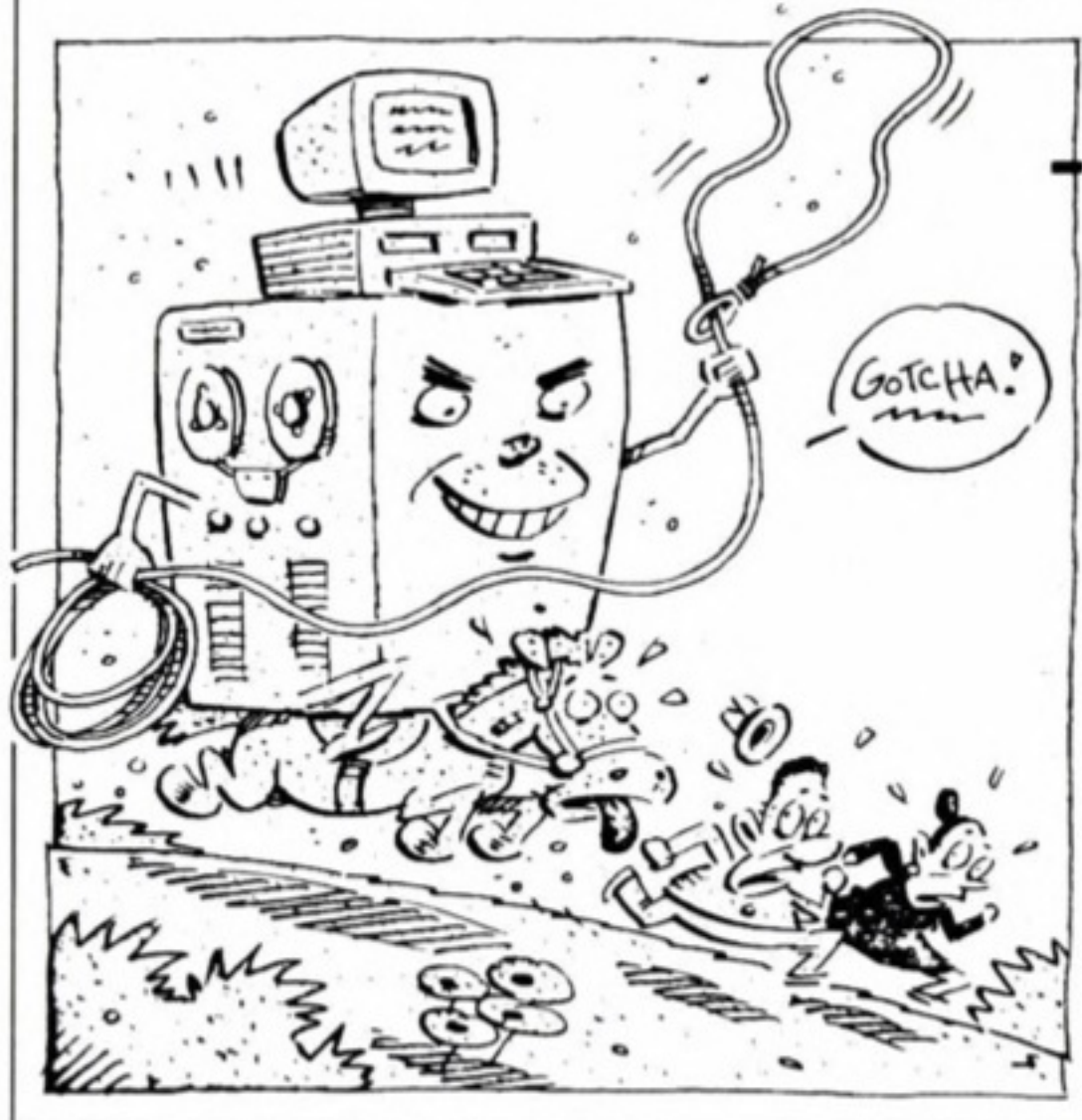
Ceri Sheppard

To catch a thief

The idea was to put the high-tech efficiency of the private sector to work on the ponderous welfare state. So last June the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services introduced an expensive computer system to unmask welfare cheaters.

The system managed within five minutes to match any current fingerprint with that of any other already in the system, preventing recipients from receiving more than one check. The \$9.5 million expenditure was approved on the assumption that it would quickly pay for itself. And while the county is already claiming huge savings from what it calls 'the deterrent factor' – hundreds of welfare recipients have had their benefits terminated after declining to be fingerprinted – the computer has so far netted less than \$50,000 in direct savings. That is less than 0.5 per cent of its cost. This is because, of the nearly 100,000 people on LA County welfare rolls, the number exposed as frauds by the computer totals...12.

Mother Jones Vol. 17 No 2 1992



END

Quote

No-one speaks out for the protection of the environment with greater moral authority than women. Only those who have fought to protect their own bodies from abuse can truly understand the rape and plunder of our forests, our rivers and our soils.

Margarita Arias of Costa Rica: *It's Time for Women to Mother Earth*, a key-note address delivered at the five day World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet held in Miami, Florida.

Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.

Isaac Asimov



Solveig Dommartin and William Hurt at the very limits of pretentiousness in *Until the End of the World*.



film

Until the End of the World

directed by Wim Wenders

Has Wim Wenders lost his marbles? *Wings of Desire* suggested that something was awry. Half a great film, it finally foundered on its own self-importance, while leaving behind some of the most remarkable black-and-white images of the 1980s and a real sense of European culture taking stock of itself for the last time. After that, the much-execrated *Notebook of Cities and Clothes* was, in its marginal and terminally trendy way, a quintessential end-of-twentieth-century statement.

Now Wenders has made his start-of-21st-century statement, and it's a fiasco. *Until the End of the World* (and that's how long it seems to last) is his idea of the ultimate road movie, a world trip that starts in Venice and ends in space via a stopover in Australia. Scripted by Wenders with novelist Peter Carey, it starts as an apocalyptic spy spoof. In the near future the world is menaced by a nuclear satellite out of control. Civilization As We Know It is going to pieces, and free spirit Solveig Dommartin is embroiled in an international game of tag with lover Sam Neill, mystery stranger William Hurt and assorted crooks and crackpots.

The first half of the film is a crazed travelogue taking in Europe, China, America, Russia and – in a deeply embarrassing screwball chase sequence – Japan. It posits a decaying world culture held together with computer technology. In the second half the whole cast fetches up in the Australian outback, where Hurt's parents (Max von Sydow and Jeanne Moreau) are living with an Aboriginal community and working on a dream machine deep in the bowels of the earth. Under the sci-fi gloss, there's a vague New Age idea of a return to the earth and to the power of dream.

But the Aborigines serve largely as a metaphor for earth-consciousness and despite their complaints about von Sydow's invasion of their 'dreamtime' there's no attempt to understand Aboriginal culture, except in the most token way. The problem is not so much that Wenders has fallen short of some vague criterion of cultural correctness. It's just a shame that, having used the entire world for his adventure yarn, he uses Australia as a kind of blank space, a mythic terrain that seems empty and featureless by comparison. You come away with the feeling that Wenders lacks any real curiosity about the world, that he still sees it through a European filmmaker's cultural tunnel vision.

In a risible coda, the film ends on an ecological research satellite out in deep space. It's probably scouting up there for the remains of Wenders' talent.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆



books

Wealth Beyond Measure

by Paul Ekins, Mayer Hillman and Robert Hutchison (*Gaia*)

Ancient Futures

by Helena Norberg-Hodge (*Rider/UK, Sierra Club/US*)

Conventional economic progress is doomed. We all know this but conveniently shove it to the back of our minds to indulge in a little more shamefaced materialism. Yet others can't have it. The rest of the world may aspire to the high-consumption, high-pollution lifestyle of the rich Western minority, but the earth would curl into a crisp if it did.

These two books come at this issue from opposite ends while sharing a green perspective. First, the overview: **Wealth Beyond Measure** is designed as 'an atlas of new economics'. It is

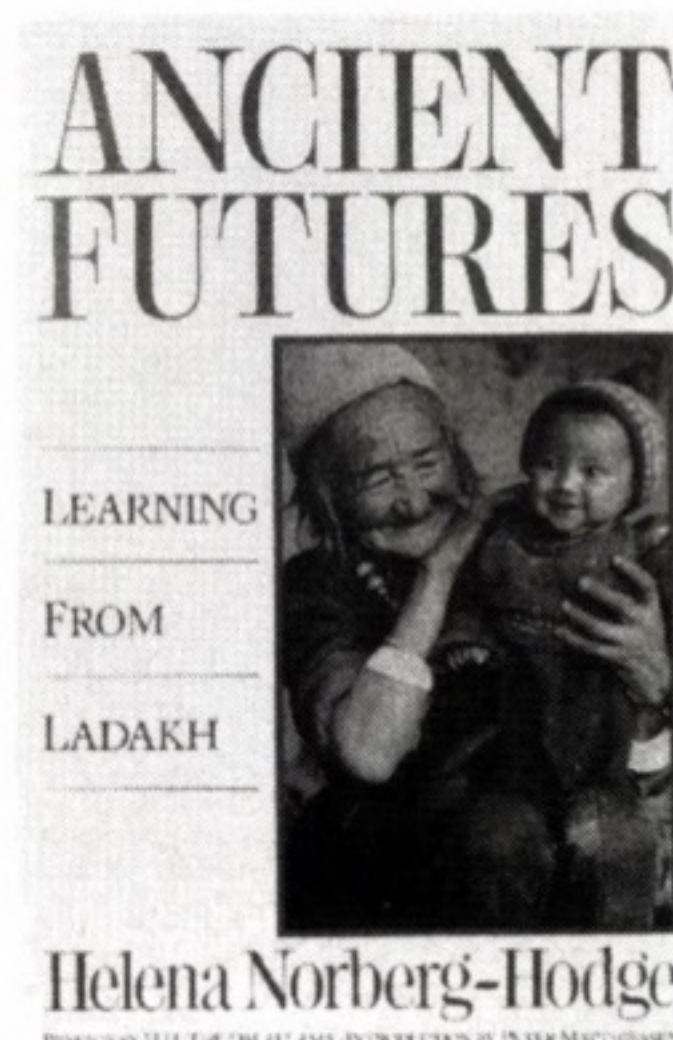
one of that recent genre of books which has moved in the direction of the magazine: topics are broken down into bite-size double-page spreads, each column of text accompanied by illustrations or fact charts. Anything to do with economics tends to be daunting and this treatment makes the book easy to dip into – though probably also pretty impossible to read from start to finish. A clearer sense of structure might have helped. But as an introduction to the ills of economic growth and the green alternatives, this is as good a place as any to start.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆

Of less use in the classroom but far easier to read is **Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh**. Ladakh borders the Chinese-colonized country of Tibet. Ladakh has not had its monasteries smashed but its culture is just as insidiously being destroyed. The enemy, it appears, is the Western development model as filtered through India: what was a trickle of influence when Norberg-Hodge first lived there 17 years ago has turned into a flood of Bombay films, polluting diesel trucks and toothrotting soft drinks, not to mention Western 'experts'.

Norberg-Hodge documents this disaster passionately, the



more so because she sets it against the land she first encountered 17 years ago. We visit a society which was once in balance with nature; investigate sys-

tems of justice, health care, farming and personal relations. Women, for example, had a stronger position than in any other society Norberg-Hodge knows. Perhaps they were helped by the custom of polyandry, two husbands to one wife: the book even caters to our prurient interest in how lovemaking was shared out (no, we're not going to tell you).

The key is the balance between people and the resources that sustain them. It is easy to be cynical about such traditional idylls. But we need dreamers. We need to document alternative utopias which have worked. Simply greening the supermarket merchandise is not enough.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆

Deterring Democracy

by Noam Chomsky (*Vintage*)

Noam Chomsky is 'arguably the most important intellectual alive', according to a writer in the *New York Times*. Some will disagree but they can hardly question his standing as America's foremost dissident. He is the horrid little boy who pipes up as the procession goes by 'Look! The Emperor has no clothes on!'

Chomsky has always argued that such events as intervention in Central America and Vietnam are not deplorable aberrations but rather elements of a consistent US policy, which he traces back to the beginning of the century. And that policy, unless prevented, looks set to continue, adapting as it always has done to changes in the global situation.

Two recent changes in particular are discussed in this book. First, the US's economic predominance is being challenged by Japan and a German-led Europe. Second, the US 'remains the only power with the will and capacity to exercise force on a global scale'. In the past the existence of the Soviet Union as rival superpower exercised a degree of restraint on the US and afforded help to countries seeking to oppose its will. That is no longer so. Will it mean more military adventurism?

The Gulf War suggests that the answer to that question is a resounding 'yes'. The introduction to **Deterring Democracy** is dated December 1991, some four months after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait but before the Coalition's shattering defeat of his forces. But Chomsky is clear that George Bush had chosen the military option very early on: the Gulf War was a logical consequence of the processes sketched out so ably in this book.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆



music

The History of Indipop

by various artists (*Great Expectations*)

To judge by the minimal crossover between music from the Indian subcontinent and the mainstream, you'd be forgiven for thinking Western countries contained no Asian communities. Perhaps it's because of a lingering embarrassment over the hippie-era discovery of classical Indian music, but it took until the mid-1980s for music from the region and its emigrant communities to be noticed again.

The most interesting things went on under the banner of 'world music' – notably singer Najma's elegant jazzification of *ghazals* (love songs) and the rise to prominence of traditional Sufi singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who was paid the questionable tribute of a remix by Massive Attack. In this curious crossover area, the Indipop label played a large part, even if it failed to connect with its potential audience. 'Pop' rather than 'Indi' is perhaps the key factor on this 1981-1991 compilation.

But there is plenty of invention. Foremost is singer Sheila



Chandra, who had a hit with the rather twee *Ever So Lonely* (included here), before going on to make a series of sometimes over-arty but adventurous solo albums. Her tracks stand out for their complex vocal overlaying and dexterity.

Then there's the straighter *bhangra* style of Jhalid; the density of Ganges Orchestra; East-West's unashamedly artless disco style; and two tracks by the Suns of Arqa, a very odd band that mixed Asian, soul, dub reggae and even Irish music. Whether Indipop's eccentric artiness has another decade in it remains to be seen, but mainstream dance and pop can only benefit from an Asian infusion.

Politics ☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent ☆☆☆☆

Very good ☆☆☆

Good ☆☆☆

Fair ☆☆

Poor ☆

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

M*A*S*H

...being the film that brought dissent into the Hollywood mainstream

WHATEVER they said they were doing, they were doing the easy kind of soft jokes and platitudes that war was hell. But what they were really doing for 12 years was bringing an Asian war into everyone's living room and the implication was that the Asians were the bad guys. I thought it was propaganda. I wanted people to walk out laughing and to hate themselves for what they were laughing at.'

This was director Robert Altman's dismissive opinion on the long-running TV spin-off of his 1970 movie *M*A*S*H*, when I interviewed him 20 years on. The most consistently impressive US director of the 1970s, Altman came to prominence in the first year of that decade with the unexpected box-office success of this Korean War black comedy, a film which captured the irreverence and cynicism of young America during the Vietnam era like no other before or since.

*M*A*S*H* is many things: a comedy; a war movie which comments on the meretricious conventions of earlier war films; a statement about the Vietnam War; an attack on the military establishment; and a window on the fractured US society of the time. *Woodstock* may be a cultural time capsule too, but it now plays like an unintentional joke. *M*A*S*H*'s humour still literally cuts to the bone: a comedy steeped in death, pain and quite withering sarcasm.

The scene is a 'Mobile Army Surgical Hospital' close to the front line during the Korean War. Helicopters ferry in an endless stream of wounded from a conflict which seems to be proceeding without logic or meaning. Over the public-address system Oriental versions of American pop songs blare out, interspersed with announcements about the nightly movie show – which always consists of a Hollywood war film.

The running gag of old war film titles does two things. First, it situates the film in a subversive relationship to an entire tradition of earlier movies which presented a sanitized war without real suffering but with clearly defined and easily achieved goals. Second, it takes account of the influence these films have had on the people fighting America's wars. *M*A*S*H* lampoons both this tradition and even its own place within it, most notably in the final lines of the movie, which come over the loudspeaker: 'Tonight's movie has been *M*A*S*H*. All the zany antics of our combat surgeons as they cut and stitch their way along the front line, operating as bombs and bullets burst around them. Snatching laughs and loves between amputations and penicillin.'

It's a great way to end the movie but also quite horrific, pointing up how absurd it is even to contemplate making entertainment out of such

grim subject matter. Yet this is exactly what the film manages to do. To paraphrase Altman's own words, we laugh but hate ourselves for doing so.

Whereas in those earlier war films the corpses and wounded would be left conveniently behind as the action adventure moved on, here we see the actual casualties dying on the operating table and the casual brutalization of the emotions of those who have to treat them – the three wisecracking new surgeons presiding over the endless bloody mess. Dishevelled, disrespectful



of authority and more concerned with playing golf and seducing nurses than anything else, these three not very likeable nonconformists sustain their grim labours with a diet of casual sex and juvenile practical jokes.

It's easy to remember the obvious humour in the film, which mostly centres on the hypocritical characters Hotlips and Major Burns. These authority figures are mercilessly sent up. But what really hits home aren't the slapstick set-pieces but rather the offhand cynicism of characters who casually sunbathe next to a wrecked helicopter and complain when another laden with wounded interrupts their golf game.

*M*A*S*H* gets comprehensively under the skin of both Hollywood movie conventions and of the fragmented society which produced it. It was hugely successful precisely because it mirrored the values and concerns of its young dissenting audience. Clean-cut contemporary stars like Tom Cruise and even Kevin Costner would have been laughed off the screen by a 1970 full house. Watching *M*A*S*H* again nearly a quarter of a century on, what's most noticeable is its utterly savage sense of morality, something that mainstream Hollywood cinema seems to have lost.

The audience which could turn a film like this into a box-office hit simply isn't there any more. Nothing better illustrates this than the fact that 16 years after his appearance in *M*A*S*H*, the third and least prominent member of the surgeon trio, Tom Skerritt, turned up as one of Tom Cruise's commanding officers in *Top Gun*. ■

Tom Tunney

*M*A*S*H* directed by Robert Altman (1970).

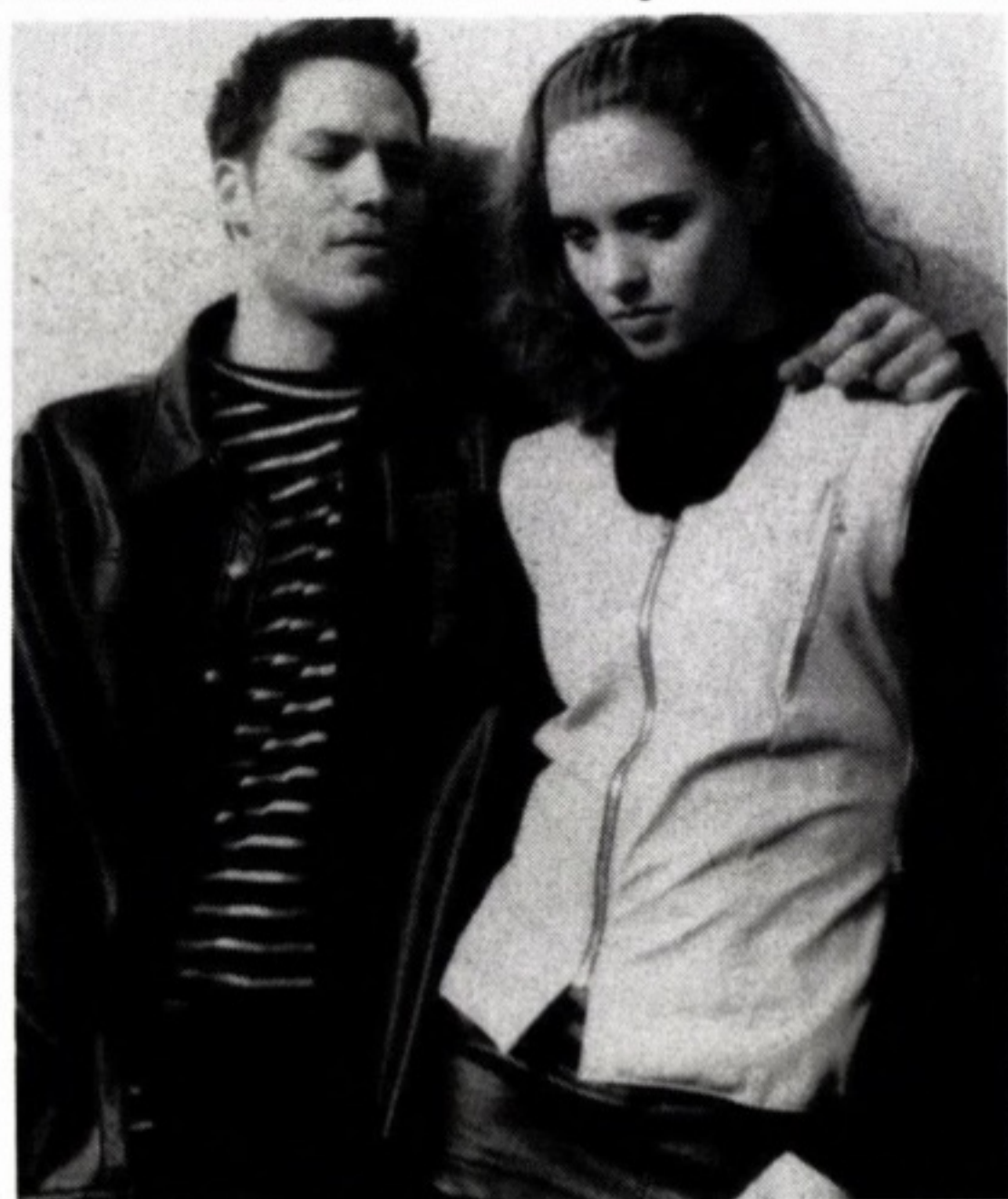


QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'curiosities'.

Where can I get good quality and cruelty-free belts, shoes and accessories?

Try the Animal Aid catalogue. Their address is 7 Castle Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1BH, UK tel: (732) 364546. A company called Mocatan makes cruelty-free shoes, belts and accessories from Studio 205, I-Mex Building, Sunbeam Street, Wolverhampton WV2 4NV,



MOCATAN

UK tel: (902) 21421. They can supply internationally and are also opening a shop at No 2 Darlay St, Soho, London. Robin Webb of 36 Gardiner St, Brighton, BN1 1UN, UK produces non-leather handmade shoes and non-leather hiking boots can be got from Roger's Wares, 8 Atwell Road, Bradford, BD9 4AV, UK tel: (274) 483390. I know of two suppliers in the US. Heartland Products, Box 218, Dakota Way, Iowa 5052, US tel: (515) 332 3087. And Aesop Unlimited, Dept. 304, PO Box 315, Cambridge MA02 140, US tel: (617) 923 1704. Both supply cruelty-free belts, wallets and shoes. I don't know of any producers in Canada or Australasia.

Jane Miles,
Stockport, UK

What is the difference between 'child mortality rate' and 'infant mortality rate' – and why does it matter?

Child mortality rate refers to children under five – infant mortality to children under the one. Infant mortality correlates very closely to the degree of deprivation in a society – child mortality less closely so.

Dr J S Barrett,
London, UK

What is the origin of the term 'Left wing' or 'Right wing'? I have an idea that it dates back to the French revolution. Is this so?

I believe that the terms Left-wing and Right-wing originate from a metaphysical debate involving the early nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Hegel. Those who sat on his left hand side took the materialistic view and were inclined to the concept of social progress. Those on the right did not.

Marc Burgess,
London, UK

What was the football war about?

In response to the replies from Jane Bertram (NI 227) and Robert Graham (NI 229) I would like to point out the real underlying causes of the 'War of the Dispossessed' – as some authors have called the Football War. These were a long standing territorial dispute combined with the treatment of Salvadoran migrant workers in Honduras. In 1969 the Honduran Government was in economic and political difficulties so it decided to play the xenophobia card.

It tried to persuade Salvadorans, many of whom had lived and worked in Honduras for decades, to return to El Salvador. Local authorities and landlords pursued the campaign with zeal so that they could grab the vacated plots. Grossly exaggerated atrocity stories began to circulate in El Salvador which became overwhelmed by the influx of refugees with nowhere to go. It was in this atmosphere that the World Cup qualifying matches were played and the El Salvadoran army decided to use the opportunity to make a land grab.

Harry Noyes,
Committee for Human Rights in Honduras, London, UK

QUESTIONS awaiting your answers:

Why do men have nipples?

Allen Wells,
Coventry, UK

Why do some cultures write from left to right, and others from right to left?

S Quinn,
Belton, UK

Why is it inadvisable – or dangerous – to allow victims of electrical torture to take fluids until many hours after the ordeal?

M Morgans,
Preston, UK

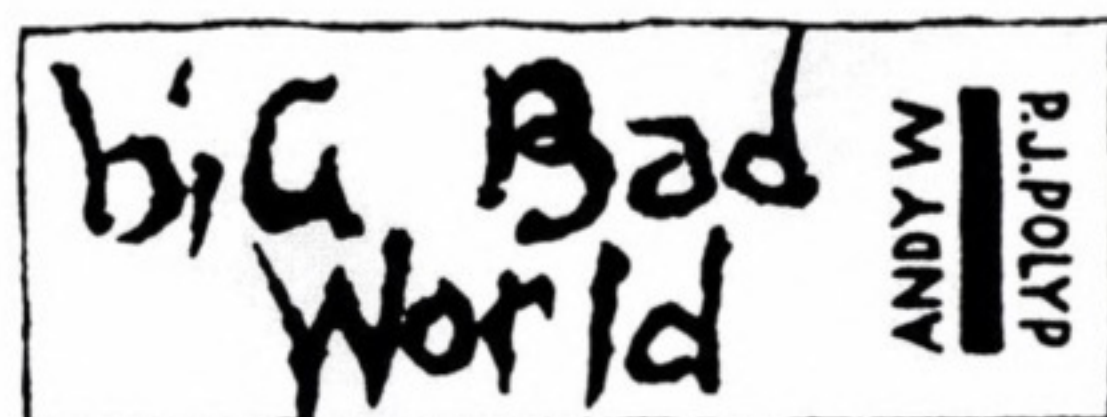
What were the origins of the Geneva Convention?

B Hastings,
Rugby, UK.

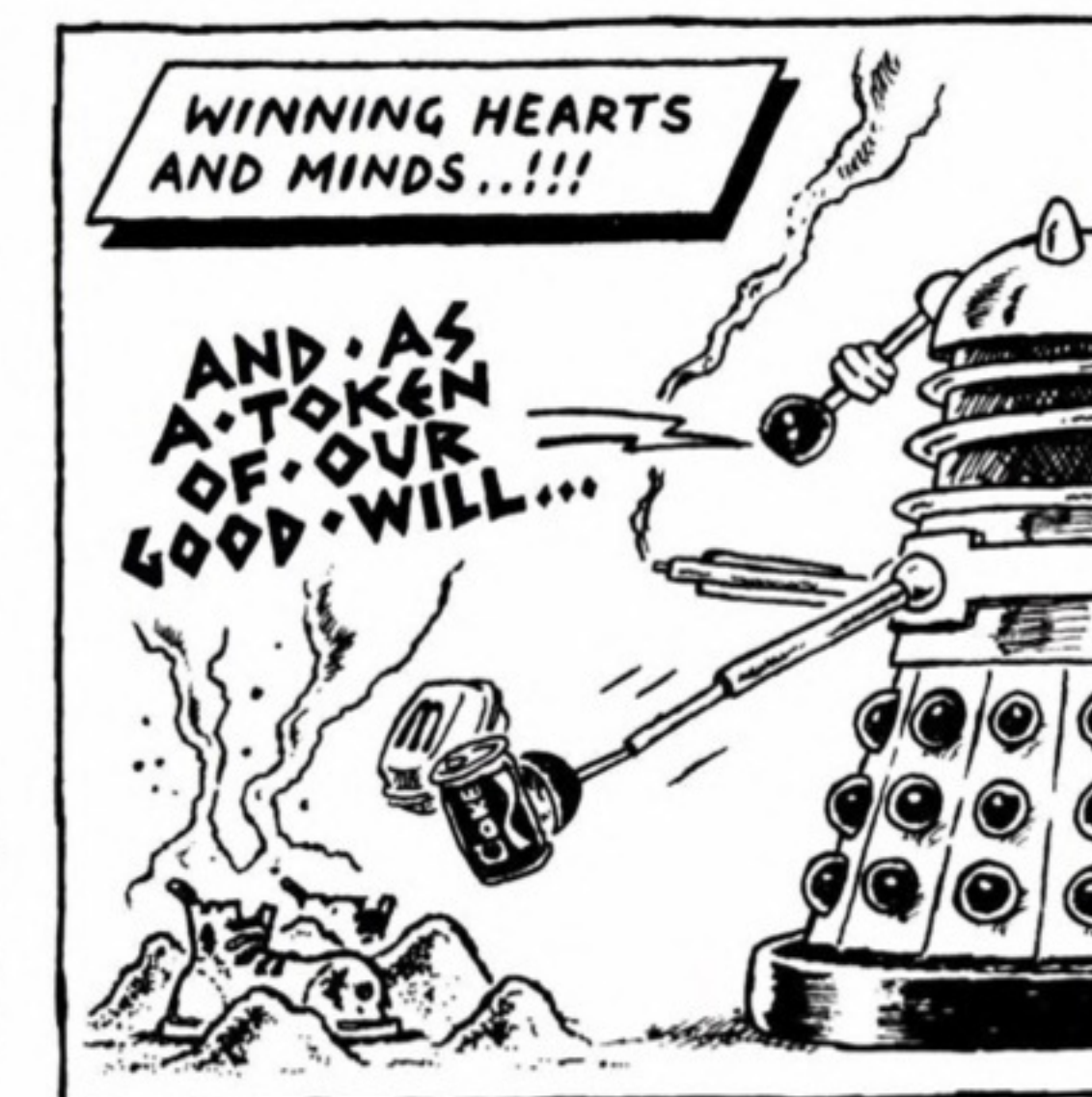
Who was the world's longest surviving dictator?

Paul Wells,
Truro, UK.

If you have any questions please send them to Curiosities, New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT THE DALEKWAY



Ethical tangles

*Cuba's highly controversial AIDS and HIV programme raises thorny issues for
Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Robert Herrick.*

CUBA is the only nation to invoke 'quarantine' and mandatory testing in order to contain the spread of HIV. With just 613 HIV-positive cases identified so far it seems to have succeeded in this aim.

But it has also met with sharp criticism, particularly in the US. In place of the old aphorism 'the operation was a success, but the patient died', one now hears it said that Cuban patients may not be dying but the operation is a moral failure.

We visited Cuba as part of a small delegation in June 1991 to take a first-hand look at its controversial programme. We arrived in Havana from San Francisco, California, with as many doubts about the ethics of the US's highly individualistic, libertarian public health response to the AIDS epidemic as we had about the human rights dimensions of Cuba's AIDS testing and quarantine.

The health care system and the welfare state in Cuba eliminate two of the unsolved problems that come with a positive HIV diagnosis in the US – obtaining health insurance and earning a livelihood. Most Cubans are accustomed to mandatory health screening of all kinds, so compulsory testing for HIV is nothing special.

But the ethics of compulsory testing is complicated because HIV concerns sexual behaviours that were not only highly stigmatized in traditional, Catholic, pre-revolutionary Cuba, but were politically oppressed and punished by the revolutionary Government. Homosexual dissidents were briefly interned in work camps during the 1960s. Even today the risks attending the suspicion of 'inappropriate' (homosexual) behaviour remain great. So mandatory testing causes particular concern. But unlike the US, Cuba does not view AIDS as a disease of homosexuals.

The first sanatorium for the evaluation, treatment and isolation of HIV-positive patients was opened in 1986. There are now seven centres in the various provinces of Havana. Some have as few as 15 patients; Santiago de las Vegas has 300, or roughly half the HIV-positives in Cuba. Dr Hector Terry Molinert, the Vice-Minister of Public Health responsible for the AIDS programme, says that 'patients are given the very best care available... AIDS sanatorium patients are better fed than the average Cuban worker is today'.

If, as Terry maintains, the sanatorium is 'not a prison' it nonetheless has its institutional rules and regulations. Should a resident behave 'irresponsibly' while on home leave (and this was described as engaging in unsafe sex practices or drinking alcohol) he or she loses their rights to leave the sanatorium unaccompanied by a medical chaperone.

'Our programme is not the best in the world...' concluded Dr Terry. 'But at least give us our due. I can show you letters from American AIDS patients begging to be admitted into our AIDS sanatoria. These are people who have been totally spurned, who are desperate, homeless and living on the streets. They are without consistent medical care and without public support. Isn't that also a violation of human rights?'

The Santiago de las Vegas sanatorium is a large, enclosed community of several acres with modern, two-story apartment duplex-

es surrounded by lush vegetation, palm trees and small gardens. It resembles many of the suburban, middle-class housing developments one sees in Mexico and Brazil. The main difference, of course, is that *this* community is surrounded by a not particularly high, white wall.

As long as they live at the sanatorium the residents continue to get full, regular salaries from the state. Almost 40 per cent of them are able to continue working inside the sanatorium. There is a pilot project to return 10 'responsible' patients to their homes and original places of work. If this is successful doctors hope to convince the Ministry of Public Health to return the majority of sanatorium patients to their communities.

One patient, a computer operator who acquired the disease through homosexual contact, said: 'When you are as sick as I am it feels good to know that help is near by at all times'. He would have preferred to be at home, but added that 'if treatment is good and our needs and those of our family are taken care of, then we can be much calmer about our condition.'

A woman patient explained that she and her husband arrived at the sanatorium together in 1986 – the first couple to do so. They find separation from their children the most difficult part of life there. But they have made many friends in the community: 'Now I feel like a stranger when I am off the compound and walk down the street...'

Cuba is not a huge concentration camp surrounded by palm trees and hiding a terrorized and cowed population. But neither is it a tropical utopia. Post-revolutionary medicine is the most

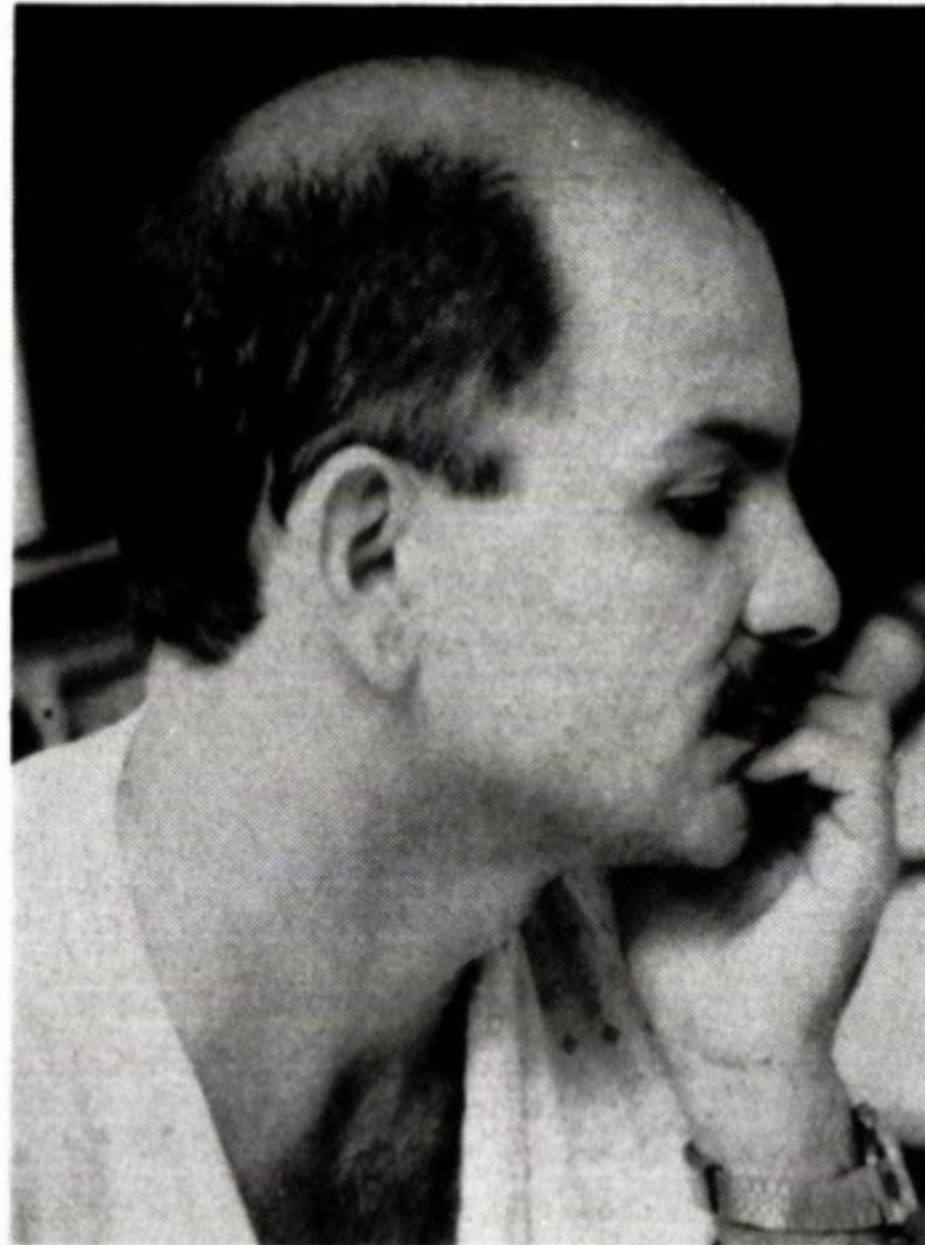
developed health-care system in the Third World. But it is also an arm of the state, and is only as democratic as the state itself. Consequently, medical surveillance hints of bodies too readily disciplined, examined and medically treated.

However, Cuba *has* succeeded in protecting the greatest possible number of citizens from the deadly threat of AIDS, and has thereby preserved their unalienable right to life. Since we in the West have been far less successful, facile ideological criticisms of the Cuban programme seem out of place.

Dr Frances Taylor, director of the San Francisco Bureau of Communicable Disease Control in the US seems willing to admit defeat. 'AIDS is not really a preventable disease,' she says. When a disease is rooted in *behaviour* it is almost impossible to interrupt the transmission... It will have to run its course... and it will become an endemic and debilitating, but not fatal, disease of the poor and underprivileged.'

And in the meantime? The activists and their posters on an AIDS vigil at the San Francisco Civil Center summed up the darker side of the current US AIDS policy of not so benign neglect: homelessness, poverty, despair in the face of crippling and malignant addictions. But at least we can console ourselves with our 'political correctness'. We can say they were 'free spirits' and that they died like all good Americans – with their rights on. ■

Nancy Scheper-Hughes is Director of the Graduate Medical Program in Medical Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley; **Robert Herrick** is Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Neurology, University of California, San Francisco.



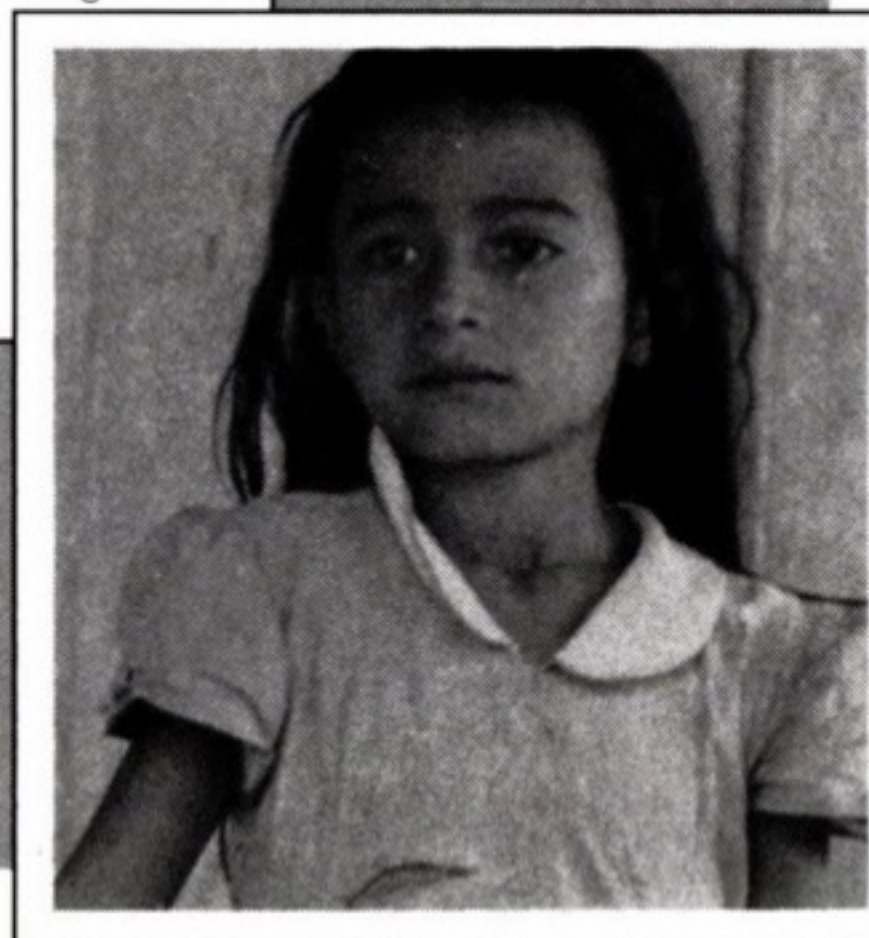
Quarantine with care: the Cuban treatment for people with AIDS.

Mexico

THERE is no easy way to define Mexico. There is the Mexico of high finance and the middle class westernized suburbs. Then there is indigenous Mexico, 11 million people living and working in much the same way as people lived at the time of the sixteenth century Spanish conquest. The majority of Mexicans are mixed blood Mestizos, but even then the way of life varies with location, be it lowland desert, temperate mountain, or tropical forest.

Perhaps the characteristic most Mexicans share is an independence and nationalism borne of a history full of conflict, occupation, civil war and insurgency, so that, after 60 years of apparent stability, the spirit of rebellion is not forgotten.

Today, six years after the earthquake which killed at least 8,000 in Mexico city and brought the country to a standstill, and despite high inflation and currency devaluation, Mexico is enjoying a boom which has seen banks reporting 1,000 per cent increases in their share values and company profits soaring. Negotiations for a common market with the US and Canada, trade agreements with most of Latin America, and President Salinas de



shanty towns surrounding major cities increases. Mexico City in particular has rapidly growing shanty towns; thousands arrive each week in search of work, having lost their land.

Land battles between peasant groups and large landowners have long been a feature of life in Mexico, and though the land constitutionally belongs to the peasants, local government and police rarely come to their aid. Assassinations of peasant leaders, accusations of torture, false imprisonment and police corruption are frequent, and the list of human rights abuses grows daily. The liberty which was fought for in the name of Zapata is yet to be won for many people, and the 60-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has done little to help the peasant.

Most Mexicans are cynical about the social and political reforms being promised by Salinas and his government. But if these reforms are not seen to work then unrest, which has never really left Mexico, will grow rapidly. Revolution is a much overused word, but in Mexico Fidel Castro is more popular than Salinas or Bush.

Ray Hoskins

Gortari's free market policies are seen by the business world as Mexico's passport out of the Third World.

The level of poverty continues to grow, however, and it is predicted that increased competition, mainly with the US, and the streamlining of industry –

much of which is newly privatized – will bring rising unemployment. Mexican farming, traditionally a community-owned, non-intensive system, is particularly threatened. As land is turned over to intensive farming, subsistence cultures are shattered and migration to the

AT A glance

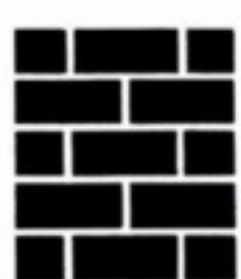
Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★

The shift from traditional industries has raised poverty rates.

1984: ★



SELF-RELIANCE ★★

Heavily dependent on foreign investment.

1984: ★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Equality is not yet law, abortion is illegal, but literacy is comparable with men's.

1984: ★



POLITICS

Dominated by one party for 60 years.



1984



LITERACY ★★★★★

High at 88% for men, 82% for women.

1984: ★★★



FREEDOM ★

Human rights abuses frequent.

1984: ★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

70 years (US 76 years) but lower in rural areas.

1984 66 years

Leader President Carlos Salinas de Gortari
Economy GNP per capita: \$1,760 per capita (US \$20,910)

Monetary unit: Peso

Main Exports: Crude Oil, Automobiles, Tomatoes

People 88.6 million

Health Infant mortality rate 36 per 1,000 live births (US 9 per 1,000)

Culture Spanish-Indian mixed race Mestizos make up 75 per cent of the population, the indigenous or Indian groups are 13 per cent, white and others 12 per cent.

Languages: Spanish is the official language, but 56 indigenous languages are spoken. The most widely used is Nahuatl, with 1.3 million speakers.

Religion: More than 90 per cent Catholic. Pre-Hispanic religions practised and combined with Catholicism.

Sources: The Mexican Economy 1991 (Banco de Mexico); State of World Population 1991; State of the World's Children 1992

Last profiled in June 1984

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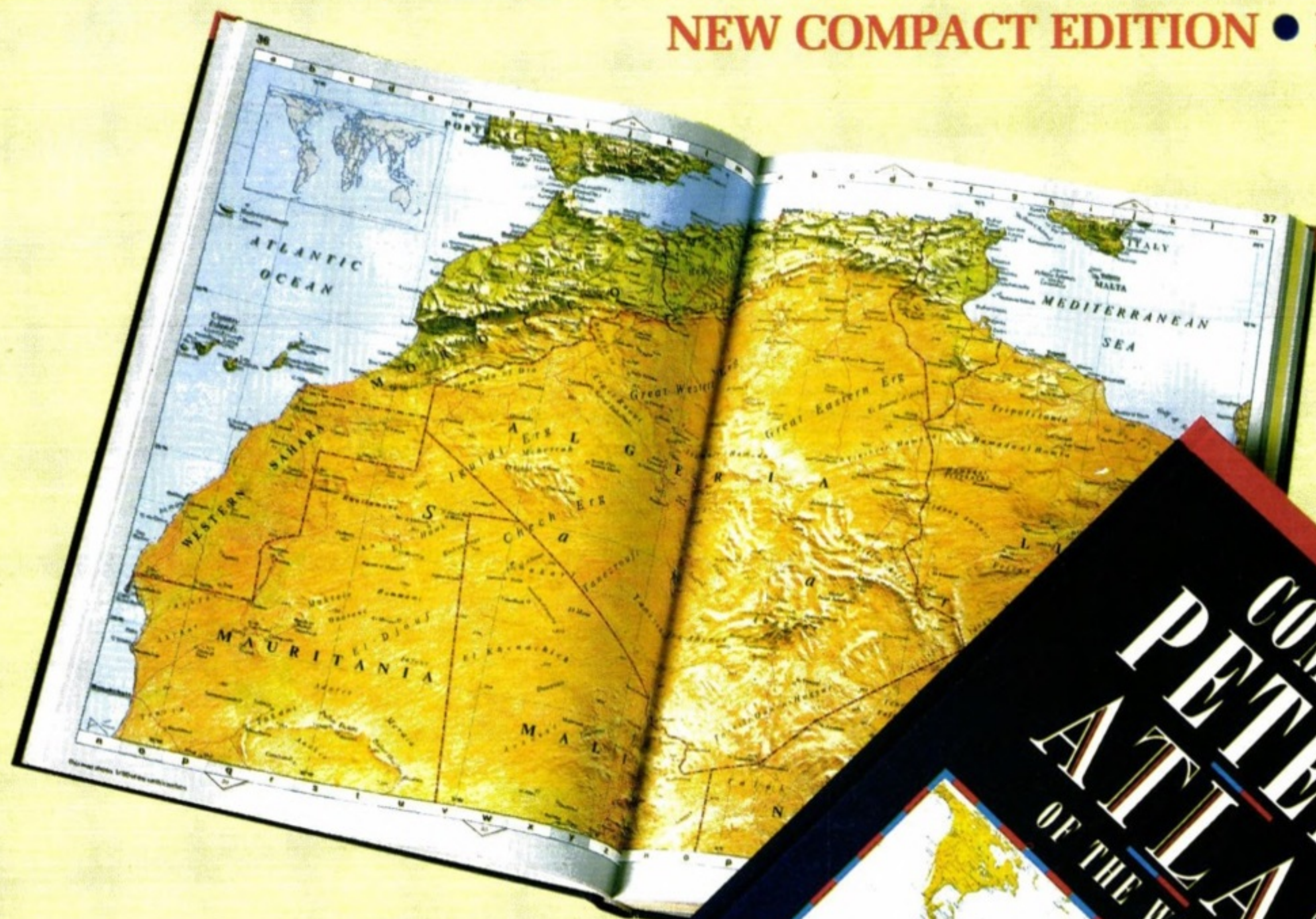
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